

# CRYPT OF CTHULHU

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## *Debatable and Disturbing:* **EDITORIAL SHARDS**

Many readers have no doubt wondered how long it would take before we gave you an issue of Crypt of Cthulhu devoted to Clark Ashton Smith, surely one of the superstars in the Weird Tales-Arkham House hall of fame. After all, our third issue was already devoted to Robert E. Howard. To compensate in some measure for the length of the wait we are releasing two Smith issues simultaneously: the present "Smith analysis issue," Crypt #26, and Untold Tales, Crypt #27, the latter a grab-bag of hitherto-unpublished Smithiana.

The issue you are now holding features several erudite pieces on Smith's work as a whole (leading off with "Clark Ashton Smith and his World of Fantasy," a lecture delivered at the Congress of the SAES at Limoges by Jean Marigny in 1978) as well as on various aspects and sidelights of his work (including three very informative research reports by Steve Behrends, CAS scholar and editor of Untold Tales). A special treat awaits you in "The Feaster from the Stars," a posthumous collaboration between Smith and Lin Carter, and in Carter's own poem "Susan."

And now for what must surely be an anomaly, even for Crypt of Cthulhu: a retraction of something in a subsequent issue! You see, we actually had Untold Tales back from the printer weeks before Crypt #26 was typed, and in the meantime two developments had occurred. First, re the presence of "The Brahmin's Wisdom" in Untold Tales: it probably has no business being there. Though the manuscript is to be found among Smith's papers, there is grave doubt as to whether it is his own work. Behrends had not intended to include it, and now he and Roy A. Squires have set your meddlesome editor straight.

Secondly, Behrends mentions another draft of "The Nemesis of the Unfinished," the original collaboration between CAS and Don Carter (so you see, "Smith-Carter collaborations" are nothing new!). In his note in Untold Tales he refers to the future publication of this version in a far-distant issue of Crypt, number 40. Yes, we do indeed have that many more issues planned, but we have recently reshuffled them. The result is that "The Nemesis of the Unfinished" by Smith and Carter will appear in Crypt #31, while "I Am Your Shadow," a variant version of "Strange Shadows" (Crypt #25) will appear in Crypt #29. More Smith plot synopses are scheduled for Crypt #30, a pot-pourri issue, as well. (And for the record, Smith's unfinished novella "The Infernal Star" may now appear as one of Lin Carter's Charnel House Chapbooks instead of in an issue of his long-planned magazine Yoh-Vombis.)

Got all that straight? If you have, you deserve to relax with our two Clark Ashton Smith issues.

--Robert M. Price. Editor

# Clark Ashton Smith and his World of Fantasy

By Jean Marigny

Translated by S. T. Joshi

Clark Ashton Smith (1893-1961) is an author relatively little known in France. Like Lovecraft he was part of that generation of American writers who, between the two wars, appeared in those popular magazines specializing in fantasy and science-fiction which are now called "pulp," and of which the most famous is without doubt *Weird Tales*.

A native of Auburn, California, where he spent the majority of his life, Clark Ashton Smith was entirely self-taught--something that did not stop him from writing his first poems from the age of 11. Conversely, it was not until the age of 35 that he became, at the instigation of his friend Lovecraft, a professional writer after having performed the most diverse occupations. He has left us seven collections of poetry and five collections of fantasy tales, the majority of which had previously appeared in *Weird Tales*. Finally, Clark Ashton Smith was also a talented painter and sculptor. His canvases have been compared to those of the symbolist Odilon Redon, and his sculptures--apparently inspired by pre-Colombian art--depict nearly all the fantastic characters conceived by Lovecraft.

In the realm of specifically fantastic literature Clark Ashton Smith is clearly a writer of the first order, and can easily bear comparison with other authors of his generation better known than he--August Derleth, Frank Belknap Long, Robert E. How-

ard, or Robert Bloch. His tales attest to a fertile imagination and a great originality which make him a writer probably unique in his field. Lovecraft himself, who was still a severe critic, wrote in regard to Smith in *Supernatural Horror in Literature*:

In sheer daemonic strangeness and fertility of conception, Mr. Smith is perhaps unexcelled by any other writer, dead or living. Who else has seen such gorgeous, luxuriant, and feverishly distorted visions of infinite spheres and multiple dimensions and lived to tell the tale?

The central interest of Clark Ashton Smith's prose work arises in that it constitutes a new stage in the evolution of American fantasy. Smith, in fact, along with Robert E. Howard, is one of the premier writers who have distinguished themselves in that new genre between traditional fantasy and science-fiction--what is called "Sword and Sorcery" or "Heroic Fantasy."

## Genres and Themes

Clark Ashton Smith is difficult to place among the writers of his generation due to the extreme variety of his themes and genres he adopted in his tales. Some rely on traditional "Gothic" fantasy, others belong unambiguously to science-fic-

tion, but the majority of the others contain elements from the one as well as the other.

His earliest stories are Oriental tales, fables where the supernatural plays only a very reduced role. Among the nine tales which belong to this category only "The Ghost of Mohammed Din," "The Ghoul," and "The Third Episode of Vathek" can be considered truly fantastic. These stories are either Arabian tales inspired by the Arabian Nights, and which could well have been written by Beckford, or are tales of India recalling the colonial stories of Kipling. The principal themes are intrigues in the seraglio and vengeance by ridiculed husbands or by tyrants jealous of their authority. One finds there such traditional characters as rajahs, caliphs, grand viziers, fakirs, eunuchs, and courtisans.

Smith's first horror tales, published from 1928 on, are at first sight very conventional. We find here the influence both of the English "Gothic" novel and of Poe, with whom Smith shares a marked taste for the macabre and the necrophilic. They are often written in the first person, and the narrator relates a particularly horrible incident: an encounter with living skeletons in "The Ninth Skeleton," with the ancient Medusa in "The Gorgon," or with monsters from outside in "The Hunters from Beyond." Necromancy and black magic are the themes most frequently recurring. Conversely, very few ghost stories are to be found.

The influence of Poe makes itself felt particularly in "The Second Interment," which recalls "The Premature Burial." Blackwood's influence appears in "Genius Loci," where we see an evil countryside literally absorb a group of incautious voyagers. Smith's tale "The Willow

Landscape," in which an art lover becomes a prisoner in a painted landscape which gradually comes to life, presents striking similarities to Blackwood's "The Man Who Was Milligan." Some stories like "The Phantoms of the Fire" make us think of Bierce's contes cruels both by their evocation of a rural America where the inhabitants have maintained the coarseness of the original pioneers and by the cruelty tinged with sadism which the tales involve.

Nevertheless, it is Lovecraft's influence which predominates both in form and in substance. Many of Smith's tales have distinctly Lovecraftian titles, such as "The Hunters from Beyond," "The Light from Beyond," "The Treader in the Dust," "The Dweller in the Gulf," or "The Immeasurable Horror." Smith utilizes narrative methods and an intentionally archaic style which approach Lovecraft, and in a great number of his tales we encounter themes dear to "the recluse of Providence," e. g., that of the incautious searcher, the artist or scholar who, after having consulted some old grimoire, ventures at the peril of his life into the tenebrous domain of the forces of Evil. "The Hunters from Beyond," where we see a sculptor using for models the monsters which he has summoned by magical incantations, seems to have been inspired by Lovecraft's "Pickman's Model." Smith is, conversely, distinguished from Lovecraft inasmuch as he bears a more marked interest in the resources of science and technology. His most recent horror tales come very close to science-fiction, as in "Schizoid Creator" where a mad scientist employs a complicated mechanism to summon the Devil and to make himself undergo a treatment to rid himself of schizophrenia, the modern version of absolute Evil.

These tales nevertheless conform generally to the conventions of contemporary fantasy: they take place in our time, and in a familiar setting--either England or California, and especially the region around Auburn. Some nevertheless escape these norms and as a result become more difficult to classify. They plunge us into a past more or less far-away or, indeed, into the future, and their setting is decidedly exotic or totally imaginary: "The Willow Landscape" takes place in China, "The Venus of Azombeii" in Africa, "The Seed from the Sepulcher" in Guyana, and "The Root of Ampoi" in Malasia. We also find tales of explorers lost in fantastic lands, or who discover fabulous cities, vestiges of vanished civilizations, such as "The Invisible City," "A Vintage from Atlantis," and "The Primal City." These tales are again Lovecraftian in tone but constitute a transition between traditional fantasy and the "heroic fantasy" of the tales about Hyperborea and Zothique. Finally, some tales escape all conventions, such as "Monsters in the Night," where a werewolf by mistake attacks a robot which he takes to be a human being.

Clark Ashton Smith has given his creative imagination full rein in another series of much more original tales which are organized by cycles around imaginary lands. The strangest of these are the tales of the Averroigne cycle, whose setting, characters, and situations are inspired by French fable, mediaeval epic, and Arthurian legendry. Here are found both the elements of Greek mythology (lamias, satyrs, the goddess Venus), mediaeval demonology (sorcerers, enchanters, demons), fairy-tales (magic mirrors, love philtres, invincible swords, giants), the "Gothic" novel (evil monasteries,

haunted castles), and contemporary fantasy (werewolves, vampires, the "Cthulhu Mythos"). Some of these tales are indeed fairy-tales for adults.

In the tales comprising the Zothique, Hyperborea, Atlantis, and Xiccarph cycles, Smith abandons all reference to a known universe. The civilizations he evokes, in spite of their resemblance to the Middle East (vast expanse of desert traversed by caravans of camels, cities of Islamic architecture, intrigues in harems, etc.), seem situated beyond space and time. The continents serving as their focus correspond in no way to the actual topography of our planet, and the events which take place there are placed outside of all historical perspective. These imaginary places are, in addition, peopled with monsters, and prodigies occur there which transport us well away from the real world. We are here fully in the region of "heroic fantasy," whose setting and characters recall those of science-fiction but where sorcery replaces modern science.

Clark Ashton Smith has, finally, approached the domain of orthodox science-fiction in a score of tales in which can be found many of the traditional themes of that genre: interplanetary voyages, explorations in time or into other dimensions, visits of extraterrestrials or descriptions of future societies with advanced technology. Smith is situated at the antipodes from "hard science-fiction": he does not explore scientific probability, and the technological apparatus he uses is described in a merely cursory fashion. What interests Smith in science-fiction is alienation, outsideness, the strange. His extraterrestrials are not only different from us morphologically and biologically, but they have a

psychology totally different from ours. They evolve in worlds whose description makes us think of stupefying surrealistic tableaux where all known norms are abolished. "Murder in the Fourth Dimension" takes place in a non-Euclidean curved space; in "The Eternal World" time is abolished; and in "The Dimension of Chance" the characters are plunged into a universe where the standard laws of physics no longer exist, and where chance reigns supreme.

#### Clark Ashton Smith's Personal Mythology

Smith learned very early to free himself from the influence of his contemporaries and create a personal world of fantasy. Already in the framework of the Cthulhu Mythos, in which he took part, he created his own deities--Tsathoggua, Abboth, Ubbo-Sathla, and Atlach-Nacha. He added the Book of Eibon to Lovecraft's imaginary library.

Following Lovecraft's example, he created out of whole cloth a mythical world which was entirely original with him. He did not, moreover, try to create a unique system; his myths are organized according to parallel schemas which each have their own internal coherence but are not interrelated. Averroigne, Zothique, and Hyperborea are hermetic worlds which have their own culture, their own legends, and their own gods.

Averroigne is situated at the centre of a known land--i.e., France--and the very name chosen by its creator makes one irresistibly think of the province of Auvergne--but here all resemblance ceases. In spite of some place-names with vaguely familiar echoes, like Vyones, the capital, Malneant, the Frenaie, or again

the abbey of Perigon at the convent of Sainte-Zenobie, Averroigne is an entirely imaginary land corresponding to no known region of France. This is a land of the Christian tradition, but the deities worshipped here are the maleficent ones of the Cthulhu Mythos. It is a land of sorcery which overflows with evil places--the castles of Malinbois or Ylourgne haunted by vampires, or the ruins of the castle of Fausseflammes where a lamia is hidden. In the forest of Broceliande which covers three-fourths of the land, the wandering traveler can encounter sorcerers, vampires, werewolves, and even satyrs. Averroigne is a mediaeval world, since most of the tales are set in the twelfth or thirteenth centuries; but it is situated outside of history, for the author carefully avoids making allusion to known historical events. In spite of its unreal character, the world of Averroigne is perfectly consistent since the same place-names are found in all the tales and the topography is very precise. Some regions can be the stage for several different stories, such as the abbey of Perigon in "The End of the Story," "The Beast of Averroigne," and "The Disinterment of Venus."

In the tales of the Zothique, Hyperborea, Atlantis, and Xiccarph cycles, Smith has recourse to the same methods as for Averroigne--with the difference that he no longer makes reference to a known land. Xiccarph is not even a part of our world, since it is an imaginary planet, just as Lophai is in "The Demon of the Flower" or Yondo in "The Abominations of Yondo." Zothique, Hyperborea, and Atlantis are vanished terrestrial continents--only Zothique has been invented out of whole cloth by the author. The two others have long belonged to the cultural inheritance of mankind. At-

lantis is that fabled isle upon which Plato located his ideal republic, and Hyperborea is an imaginary continent situated in northern Europe, to which Pindar attributed a temperate climate and which later received the name of the Kingdom of Thule. Starting from these legendary continents, Smith creates a fantastic world, making allusion to other imaginary lands like Lemuria or the vanished continent Mu. These lands are situated beyond our known environment, and the author can give free rein to his imagination, as Lovecraft did in his dream world. Smith's imaginary regions are constructed by a coherent topography like that of Averroigne; and it is almost possible, following the indications given by Smith in the various tales, to chart a precise map of Hyperborea and Zothique. The same place-names reappear, and sometimes the same characters are found in several tales, like the sorcerer Eibon in the Hyperborea cycle. Each land has its own mythology and its own gods: Mordiggian and Thasaidon are the deities of Zothique, while Ubbo-Sathla and Tsa-thoggua belong to the Hyperborean pantheon.

In regard to these lands Smith employs a completely fantastic nomenclature. While the names of the cities in Averroigne must satisfy the norms of the French language, those of the cities of Zothique or Hyperborea no longer correspond to any known linguistic criterion, and the same is true for the names of characters. Clark Ashton Smith, like Lovecraft, is fond of imagining bizarre, even unpronounceable names like Puthuum, Knygathin Zhaum, Loquameethros, Xexanoth, and Avoosl Wuthoqqan--and these are only some examples; there are dozens of others. Smith's gods, like those of Lovecraft, express themselves in incomprehen-

sible languages. In "The Door to Saturn" the message of the god Hzi-ulquoigmnazh is recorded thus: "Iq-hui dlosh odhglongh"--reminiscent of the celebrated incantation in "The Call of Cthulhu": "Ph'nglui mglw'-nagl fhtagn." These barbarous words, emerging from another world, help to reinforce the impression of the strange and the unreal. Finally, Clark Ashton Smith's fantastic lands are peopled with flying dragons, speaking birds, vampiric flower-women, and other monsters more bizarre still. It is sometimes difficult to distinguish reality from illusion, as in "The Abominations of Yondo," and this blurring contributes to the tale an emphatically dream-like character.

Smith's science-fiction tales seem like a sort of extension of his heroic fantasy tales. The planets described there also have strange names and are peopled with monsters. In contrast to what he has done with Hyperborea and Zothique, Smith has not tried in this field to construct a coherent and unique framework. The planet Mars, for example, which is the setting for several tales, is each time described under a totally different aspect, and each tale is entirely autonomous.

#### Clark Ashton Smith's Literary Artistry

Clark Ashton Smith's work scarcely corresponds to the definitions customarily given to the genre of the fantastic. In fact, only in a small number of tales like "The Hunters from Beyond" can there be found that "strange, almost unbearable irruption into the real world" which Roger Caillois has mentioned. Smith is fond of plunging his reader directly into an unreal world which is not necessarily opposed to the reassur-



ing world of everyday reality. This is particularly true in the tales of the *Averoigne*, *Hyperborea*, and *Zothique* cycles. The reader enters head first into these imaginary worlds; he must accept their norms and can rely upon them entirely, knowing in advance that all rational explication of the narrated events will be vain. We do not, as a general rule, find in Smith that ambiguity, that uncertainty which according to Todorov is the central condition of authentic fantasy. Moreover, if we agree with Lovecraft that fantasy is inseparable from pain and horror, we must acknowledge that Smith places himself well within this conception. He excels, in fact, in descriptions of macabre or horrible scenes like the drowned and half-eaten corpses who come back to life in "Necromancy in Naat," or the hordes of mummies, skeletons, and decomposed corpses who emerge from their tombs in "The Empire of the Necromancers."

There is a latent sadism in these tales of Smith--he is fond of visibly describing scenes of torture or of particularly cruel vengeance. Smith, however, never reaches the limits of the unbearable--in contrast, for example, to Stoker--and he never founders in the cheap eroticism of a good number of his contemporaries. Smith is, moreover, much less effective when he embarks upon traditional fantastic themes: his vampires, werewolves, and lamias are not very terrifying and incite us more often to laughter. What is most lacking in Smith is that profound conviction as to the powers of the forces of Evil which we find in a Lovecraft, a Blackwood, or a Machen, or again that pathological obsession which is at the heart of Poe's work.

Clark Ashton Smith's literary art

is situated on another level: it is an art above all visual, in which the writer takes the place of a painter, and his pen the place of a brush. Where other authors are content for the most part to suggest, Smith is fond above all of describing with a riot of detail rarely equalled. His extraordinary lands peopled with disquieting monsters, his Dantesque abysses, his evocations of danses macabres, his cosmic visions stamped with a strange poetry raise him to the level of the great creators of Fantasy, and he sometimes chances, in this precise regard, to surpass his mentor and friend Lovecraft.

Although he belonged to Lovecraft's small coterie and was subject, as we have seen, to his influence, Clark Ashton Smith does not belong to any school. His fantastic work is probably unique in its field, and if his tales have not left very profound traces in the literary history of the twentieth century, Smith himself regarded them merely as a means of gaining income, preferring to devote the majority of his time to painting and poetry.

The tales he has left us nevertheless testify to a great creative imagination, a vast culture, and a perfect mastery of the English language. His elegant and slightly archaic style make some of them true poems in prose. Clark Ashton Smith is above all an enchanter, and his fantastic world belongs to the domain of the marvelous, i.e., to an imaginary world which no longer has anything in common with the real world. Smith is, one might say, the Bosch or the Dali of American fantasy. He has opened new perspectives both in contemporary fantasy and in science-fiction, and as such fills the role of a pioneer.

# The Last Hieroglyphs

SMITH'S LOST OR UNPUBLISHED FICTION

By Steve Behrends

Beyond his 110 mature published stories, Clark Ashton Smith is known to have completed a handful of others, and to have come close to finishing a few more; and although Crypt of Cthulhu has recently brought "Double Cosmos," "Nemesis of the Unfinished," "The Dart of Rasasfa," and "Strange Shadows" into print for the first time, and at least one more tale should appear elsewhere in the near future, several major pieces are still outstanding.

Smith's unpublished stories include both fantasies and ironic non-fantastics. A handful of manuscripts in the latter category are still with us and can be found in the Smith Papers Collection at Brown University ("A Copy of Burns," "The Pawnbroker's Parrot," "Checkmate," "The Flirt," "A Platonic Entanglement," "The Expert Lover;" perhaps others), but the majority of the unpublished weird tales--which this article discusses--are missing.

In contrast to the numerous synopses and fragmentary opening paragraphs in Untold Tales, the works outlined below represent substantial efforts on Smith's part: a tale that Smith completed or carried for quite a distance is naturally a more elaborate and detailed affair than a handful of notes. Also, Smith thought enough of these particular plot-germs to flesh them into stories . . . perhaps their ideas were close to his heart (e.g., "Mnemoka"); perhaps he simply felt they would yield marketable yarns. Either way, whatever we can discover about these missing or unpublished works should

contribute to our understanding of Smith as a writer of weird fiction.

The bulk of our information concerning these stories has come from Smith's letters to his writer-friends, but I would also like to acknowledge the information and help given me by Glenn Lord, Rah Hoffman, Don Fryer and Roy Squires in this regard, and to thank Mr. E. Hoffmann Price especially for discussing "Dawn of Discord" and "House of the Monoceros."

## Completed Stories

"The Red World of Polaris"  
(August, 1930, 13,500 words; lost?)

"My 'Red World of Polaris' is pseudo-scientific with a vengeance: it deals with a race of people who had their brains implanted into indestructible metal bodies, and who are going to perform the same office for the humans who visit their world. The denouement is terrific . . ." (CAS to HPL, 8/22/30); "The last chapter could easily afford themes for Dore or Martin, in regard to cataclysmic scope at any rate" (CAS to HPL ca. mid-September 1930). This ending may be hinted at in the following salutation: "Greetings and valedictions from the outer moon of the Red World, in the hour following the collapse of the atomic vault, the outbreak of the metal-eating monsters from the subterranean realm, and the downfall of the last Sabelian tower of the Zophratars (?)." (CAS to HPL August 22, 1930.)

The idea of brains kept alive in

artificial bodies dates from Smith's childhood. As other stories based on similar notions began to appear in the science-adventure magazines, he grew pessimistic about "The Red World's" salability.

"Like Mohammed's Tomb"  
(October 1930; 3, 000 words; lost?)

Writing to Lovecraft in mid-October 1930, Smith mentioned that he was "lagging over a scientific horror, 'Like Mohammed's Tomb.' The chief merit is that the scientist uses his contraption to commit a highly novel and unique suicide, and also to remove a budding fellow-inventor from the sphere of mundane effort." The story was sent along in his next letter (November 10, 1930): "Here's a little scientific horror for you to read. The anti-gravitation mechanism was put to good use, I think."

Elsewhere in his fiction Smith has referred to the tomb of Mohammed; in "The Master of the Asteroid" we find the sentence, ". . . we hang suspended like Mohammed's coffin, remote from earth and equally remote from the stars, in an incommensurable vastness without bourn or direction." The "Tomb" tale might then resemble "A Murder in the Fourth Dimension," in which a man is deposited into a barren realm beyond the universe we know, perhaps resulting from his use of the anti-gravitation device, which may have repelled him simultaneously from all objects of matter.

Donald Sidney-Fryer tells us that both "Red World" and "Mohammed's Tomb" were sold to Michael DeAngelis (editor of Asmodeus) in the 1950s.

"The Face by the River"  
(October 1930; 2, 500 words; lost?)

"Here is a tale . . . which I wrote

in a single day. There's not much of the cosmic in it; but it might interest you as an attempt at psychological realism" (CAS to HPL ca. October 17, 1930).

A copy of this was at one time included in Smith's posthumous papers, but was never delivered to Brown University. Mr. Rah Hoffman, who read the tale in manuscript, remarks "I recall the story as dreadful, embarrassing, etc. As I do not like ghost stories, not even [Smith's] 'The Phantoms of the Fire,' I truly suspect this story concerned such a phantom face by the river" (Hoffman to Behrends, August 23, 1984).

"Dawn of Discord" and  
"House of the Monoceros"

It's unlikely that either story was written before May 1938. Both were handed over to E. Hoffmann Price, who rewrote them for publication in Spicy Mystery Stories, where they appeared under his own name, "Dawn of Discord" in October 1940, and "House of the Monoceros" in February 1941 as "The Old Gods Eat" (Glenn Lord discovered this). Regarding the eventual fate of Smith's own drafts, Price writes: "When the scripts he gave me had served their purpose, of course I scrapped them. Scripts were not sacred relics" (Price to Behrends, June 9, 1984).

Smith's Completed Stories log tells us that "Discord" and "Monoceros" were originally 6,000 and 5,200 words in length, respectively; Price's efforts brought them to 9,000 and 7,800 words. At the moment we have only the Price versions to examine, since no draft, fragment, or synopsis by Smith has turned up for either story . . . and the stories in print read nothing like Smith (this is especially true of "Monoceros"). The reader is referred to "The

Price-Smith Collaborations" elsewhere in this issue for synopses of these tales. "House of the Monoceros" can be found in Price's Far Lands, Other Days. According to Mr. Price, a third story was given him by Smith: "There were three CAS stories; alas, I have no recollection of unpublished #3, neither substance nor title" (Price to Behrends, July 17, 1984). Could it have been "The Face by the River"?

"A Good Embalmer"  
(February 1931; MS draft in Smith Papers Collection)

This is scheduled for inclusion in the second issue of Lin Carter's Yoh-Vombis, and may also appear as a limited pamphlet from the private press of Roy Squires.

### Major Unfinished Stories

"The Infernal Star"  
(Early February 1933; left incomplete at 10,000 words; copies are in the hands of several private collectors, and two pages of an early draft are verso to the "Weaver in the Vault" manuscript in the John Hay Library's Lovecraft Collection.)

"The tale involves a harmless bibliophile in a series of wild and mysterious happenings, ending in his translation to Yamil Zakra; a star which is the fountain-head of all the evil and bale and sorcery in the universe. It mixes wizardry and necromancy with the latest scientific theory of 'radiogens,' or atoms of sun-fire, burning at a temperature of 1500 Centigrade in the human body. I am using the innocuousness of the hero's normal personality as a foil to that which he temporarily assumes beneath the influence of an amulet that stimulates those particles in his

body which have come from Yamil Zakra" (CAS to AWD, March 1, 1933). The amulet was "found behind the cracked binding of a volume of Jane Austin" (CAS to DeCamp, September 21, 1952); and "In the Foreword, the hero . . . is arrested in puris naturalibus by a patrolman while trying to reach his suburban residence at dawn via a main avenue of his home city. He tells the subsequent story to the friend who rescues him from his plight, as an explanation of how he found himself in that condition of 'Adamic starkness'" (CAS to AWD, March 9, 1933).

The existing manuscript mentions Smith's invented tome, The Testaments of Carnamagos (as does his "Xeethra" and "The Treader of the Dust"), Hyperborea, Zothique and the Necronomicon. It also features the same "Avalzant, Envoy of Cosmic Evil" pictured in The Fantastic Art of Clark Ashton Smith. A character which had yet to appear in the story by the time Smith stopped work on it is the subject of another painting: describing a portrait he had sent to Robert Barlow, Smith explained, "Malanoth, concerning whom you inquire, is a master wizard from the world Pnidleethon, which revolves about Yamil Zakra, central sun of evil, and its dark companion, Yuzh" (CAS to RHB, September 10, 1934).

Smith had planned this novel as a serial for Weird Tales, and when Wright discouraged him he set it aside; but, as with his "Master of Destruction," he toyed with the idea of finishing it in the late 1950s and showed the fragmentary draft to August Derleth in February 1958 in hopes of an eventual Arkham House release. An early draft in the Rah Hoffman/CAS collaboration "The Arcana of Arkham-Auburn," which describes Hoffman's early visits

with Smith, gives Smith's sense of the story during the 1940s: "He has about a third or half of a book-length fantasy novel written, which he expects to complete one of these days. It is titled 'The Dark Star' . . . It is his first novel, and he wants to write it exactly as he wants, without any editorial changes. Consequently he hopes to publish it as a book, and if this does not work out, he intends to include it in another Arkham House collection." Note that Smith's "new" title "The Dark Star" was also his original title, since the early synopsis for the tale, included in The Black Book, is called "The Dark Star."

### "Mnemoka"

Several partial drafts have been preserved in the Smith Papers Collection, together with their carbons; this duplication is very fortunate, inasmuch as all pages are terribly burned. With some effort, however, the first 2,000 words can be entirely reconstructed, with fragments totaling 700 words extending beyond. Had he ever completed it, "Mnemoka" would have been Smith's fourth story with the Martian setting of "The Vaults of Yoh-Vombis," "The Dweller in the Gulf," and "Vulthoom."

Mnemoka is a drug, brewed from a Martian cactus, that allows the user to re-experience past events in his or her own life. Thematically the tale is similar to "The Chain of Aforgomon," in which a character calls upon the Lurking Chaos Xexanoth to achieve the same end. Also recall "The Last Incantation," wherein Malygris the mage seeks to resurrect his first love, and to recapture his innocent past. But unlike these two stories, the main character is not someone we can sympathize with: he is "Space-Alley Jon," a murderer

and drifter of the space-lanes, who purchases the illicit Mnemoka from the Aihai Pnaglak, hoping to relive some hours with his first love, Sophia (remember "Last Incantation"?). Unfortunately, Jon is also haunted by far less pleasant memories, memories of a brutal murder he had committed. After taking the drug, some physical manifestations of his memories appear in the present, and time seems confused. . . . Here the story breaks off.

Little is known regarding "Mnemoka's" composition; references to it have yet to appear in Smith's correspondence. Conjectural evidence from The Black Book of Clark Ashton Smith indicates the story dates from Smith's burst of creative energy in the mid- to late-1950s: Item 210 lists the title along with a host of other stories considered or completed during the '50s, such as "Symposium of the Gorgon" (August 1957), "Theft of Thirty-Nine Girdles" (October 1952-April 1957), "Wingless Phoenix"--this almost surely became "Phoenix" (November 1953)--and "Monsters in the Night" (April 1953).

An attempt has been made to complete this story. Since no synopsis has yet come to light, I've drawn the extant beginning and fragments towards a conclusion of my own devising. Smith's reconstructed beginning stops after the phrase, "And now that grisly wound," and is entirely unadulterated; some 1,400 words follow in which all of the fragments appear, with an equal mix of Smith and Behrends; and my 700 word conjectural conclusion commences with the paragraph beginning "The light of every gem. . . ." "Mnemoka" is slated for the third or fourth issue of Lin Carter's Yoh-Vombis.

# The Clark Ashton Smythos

By Will Murray

Clark Ashton Smith is considered to be one of the signal contributors to H. P. Lovecraft's Cthulhu Mythos. According to Weinberg and Berglund's Reader's Guide to the Cthulhu Mythos, Smith produced twenty-six Mythos stories in all. They range from the inconsequential and doubtfully classified tale of Averroigne, "The Satyr," to the overwhelmingly cosmic "Ubbo-Sathla." Of course, Smith's premier story of this type has to be the classic "Tale of Satampra Zeiros," a story that so impressed H. P. Lovecraft when he read it in manuscript, that he immediately incorporated Smith's toad-god, Tsathoggua, into the pantheon of the Mythos.

Despite Smith's many contributions to the canon, very few of these are typical Mythos stories. That is, few are set in the modern world and involve the traditional Lovecraftian themes of threatening entities from Out There. Two exceptions are "The Nameless Offspring," itself unusual because it is set in modern England, and "The Hunters from Beyond," which is a tale about soul-devouring Elementals from another dimension. You won't find Cthulhu or Yog-Sothoth in a Smith story, although they are mentioned once or twice under variant spellings like Kthulhut and Yok-Zothoth.

No, most of Smith's Mythos stories are set in medieval Averroigne, or further back in time in his stories of the prehistoric Polar continent of Hyperborea. Oddly enough, none of his stories of the future continent of Zothique can be classified as belonging to the Mythos, although there is no apparent reason why some of them

couldn't have been worked into it. Zothique is as much of a land of magic and fantasy and horror as Hyperborea, and even if it weren't, the Cthulhu Mythos is no stranger to modernity--or even to science fiction.

A more macabre kind of horror infuses Smith's Mythos yarns, one laced with magic and mocking humor. There is none of HPL's grounding in reality to prepare the reader for the wonders of exposure to the unthinkable. Not a shred of his scientific materialism, or whatever one wishes to call Lovecraft's world view. And no brooding New England farmhouses. Smith presents his view of the Mythos in earlier ages, where the line between fantasy and reality is not as clearly drawn. As such, there is significantly less impact to his Mythos entities. When Tsathoggua emerges, black and furred and possessing a viscous plasticity, from his bowl in "The Tale of Satampra Zeiros," he is a horrible figure, but because Smith describes him in detail, referring to his batlike and toadlike attributes, this entity does not provoke the awe of a Cthulhu, or even an Azathoth, whom Lovecraft carefully never described. He is even less horrible to the reader than the impossibly ophidian Knygathin Zhaum, the supposed descendant of Tsathoggua who stalked Hyperborea in "The Testament of Athammaus." In a world of lurking horror, Tsathoggua is just another loathsome critter.

Smith's alleged Mythos stories are chock full of such beings. In "The Weird of Avoosl Wuthoqquan," it is an unnamed guardian of a trea-

sure who possesses ". . . a toad-like face and a swollen, squidgy body and numerous cuttlefish limbs or appendages," who, according to Smith, did not "resemble any species of animal, or any known god or demon of Hyperborea," and therefore was most definitely not Tsathoggua. This creature speaks in a sardonic, but very human voice, and its motives are rather mundane. It watches over the treasure in order to feast on unlucky treasure hunters, which it does to Avoosl "in a leisurely and methodical fashion" at the story's end. Can you imagine Cthulhu calling to skin divers venturing too close to R'lyeh in such a fashion? I cannot.

Smith's most cosmic Mythos entities were Rlim Shaikorth, the white worm of "The Coming of the White Worm" and Ubbo-Sathla, of the story by that name. Shaikorth (it's a measure of the lack of awe Smith's entities generate that one's reflex is to treat their names like Christian names--ever hear anyone call Yog-Sothoth "Sothoth"? ) is an Old One, according to Smith, who came down from the stars on his ice mountain, Yikilth, and resembles a gargantuan white worm with bleeding eyes. Despite this nonanthropomorphic appearance, he speaks in a too-human voice and possesses a disappointingly cliché hunger for the flesh of his worshippers. A worshipper of the worm learns of his imminent fate and disposes of Shaikorth with a bronze short sword, although in dying, the entity vanquishes his killer in a torrent of black and terrible blood.

"The Coming of the White Worm" is a mordant joke on the concept of becoming one with the godhead, and this theme is carried to its ultimate conclusion in "Ubbo-Sathla," Smith's most Lovecraftian Mythos story. It's the story of Londoner Paul Tregar-

dis, whose discovery of a mystic crystal once owned by the Hyperborean wizard, Zon Mazzamalech, leads him to plumb the depths of the Necronomicon and The Book of Eibon. Paul discovers that in an earlier incarnation, he was Zon Mazzamalech--who had searched in vain for the lost tablets of the pre-human gods which ". . . were guarded in the primal mire by the formless, idiotic demiurge, Ubbo-Sathla."

Via the crystal, Paul goes back through time, reliving each of his past lives in descending order until his consciousness has regressed to his prehuman incarnations and:

There, in the gray beginning of Earth, the formless mass that was Ubbo-Sathla reposed amid the slime and the vapors. Headless, without organs or members, it sloughed from its oozy sides, in a slow, ceaseless wave, the amoebic forms that were the archetypes of earthly life. Horrible it was, if there had been aught to apprehend the horror; and loathsome, if there had been any to feel loathing. About it, prone or tilted in the mire, there lay the mighty tablets of star-quarried stone that were writ with the inconceivable wisdom of the pre-mundane gods.

And there, to the goal of the forgotten search, was drawn the thing that had been--or would sometimes be--Paul Tregardis and Zon Mezzamalech. Becoming a shapeless eft of the prime, it crawled sluggishly and obliviously across the fallen tablets of the gods, and fought and ravened blindly with the other spawn of Ubbo-Sathla.

It's an appropriately cosmic sto-

ry, but there is still that element of ironichumor in Smith's Worm Ouroboros-style ending which sets this story, like all of Smith's, apart from the distinctly sober Lovecraft brand of Mythos excursion.

It is significant to note that of all of Clark Ashton Smith's Mythos entities, the only one H. P. Lovecraft thought enough of to include in his stories, or for that matter in the genealogy of Mythos entities reproduced on page 183 of Selected Letters IV, was Tsathoggua. Strictly speaking, there isn't much room in the pure Lovecraft Mythos for the likes of Rlim Shaikorth, or even Ubbo-Sathla, and Hyperborea is as foreign to Lovecraft's ideas as Barsoom, although HPL did drop the name from time to time.

Smith's stories are excellent, but later, less talented contributors to the Mythos are more in line with Lovecraft's concepts. This is not a criticism, but merely one person's assessment. Smith, in his own way, was an original thinker. What he lacked in terms of Lovecraft's world view, he more than made up for with his own unique brand of imaginative conceits. As such, the Cthulhu Mythos stories of Clark Ashton Smith, although in some instances inspired by HPL's ideas, are not truly continuous with them. Perhaps it's time to recognize Smith's achievements for what they are: offshoots of the Mythos, not a part of it. And perhaps, while we credit Smith for being his own writer, with a personal vision as distinctly different as Lovecraft's, it's time to honor Smith's supposed Mythos stories, his private Smythology, as it were, with a rubric of their own.

Some may rankle at this suggestion. A Mythos story is a Mythos story, after all. Fine. But doesn't Smith deserve separate credit for

taking the Mythos beyond the pale of pastiche? So let's split the difference and call Smith's twenty-six Mythos stories a kind of sub-set to the canon. A mythology that compares to the Mythos the way the myths of the Romans compared to the earlier Greek myths: the Clark Ashton Smythos.

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# An Annotated Chronology of Smith's Fiction

By Steve Behrends

Chronologies are dull affairs, of course; they can come in handy at times, but how often have you curled up with one before a crackling fire? It would be much more interesting, say, to have a list of the stories that the author himself considered his finest. Smith never gave us such a list; and while he did select his best work for inclusion in Out of Space and Time, he commented at the time that the "choice seems pretty difficult, since, after a few outstanding items such as 'The Double Shadow' and 'A Night in Malneant,' I seem to find dozens or scores of fairly equal merit" (CAS to August Derleth, September 5, 1941).

Still, while he may not have put them down in one place, Smith did have opinions about his stories and frequently expressed them to his pen-pals. In an effort to bridge the gap between arid scholarship and light entertainment, some of these comments have been gathered together, along with other informational tidbits, and appear below the pertinent title in the following, spiced-up Smith chronology.

A date in brackets indicates a date of completion, unless noted, and a number in parentheses before a title gives that story's place in the Completed Stories log. This ordering has been followed as much as possible, despite minor disagreements with dates from other sources. Only when a tale's completion was considerably delayed with respect to its inclusion in the log has the ordering been changed. Unfinished

works are marked with an asterisk.

"The Abominations of Yondo" [1925]  
"I think it was mainly Lovecraft's interest and encouragement that led me to ['Yondo'], which appeared in The Overland Monthly and "evok[ed], I was told, many protests from the readers."

(1) "Sadastor" [1925]

"The Ninth Skeleton" [after 4/28 and before 8/28]

(2) "The Last Incantation"  
[10/23/29]

(3) "The End of the Story"  
[10/1/29] "It's a good tale-- especially from the sales-angle."

(4) "The Phantoms of the Fire"  
[10/6/29] "I prefer nearly all my other tales."

(5) "A Night in Malneant" [10/15/29]  
"One of my best atmospheric"

(6) "The Resurrection of the Rattlesnake" [10/10/29] "Pretty punk, except for the touch of genuine horror at the end."  
"There isn't much to it."

(7) "Thirteen Phantasms"  
[10/11/29]

(8) "The Venus of Azombeii"  
[11/11/29] "A weird mixture of poetry and melodrama."

(9) "The Tale of Satampra Zeiros"  
[11/16/29] "One of my best."

(10) "The Monster of the Prophecy"  
"One of my favorite yarns."  
"Absolutely novel in interplanetary fiction." "The result of a definite inspiration."  
"The plot . . . was good from

- any angle; and I am willing to bet that the satiric implications will be missed by a lot of readers." "I'm sure it's the first interplanetary story on record, where the hero doesn't return to earth at the end!"
- (11) "The Metamorphosis of Earth" [late 1929] "Based on a far from bad idea." "Probably the best element is the satire." ". . . am now engaged in killing off an odious bunch of scientists. . ."
- (12) "The Epiphany of Death" [1/25/30] "Inspired by 'Randolph Carter' and . . . written in about three hours."
- (13) "A Murder in the Fourth Dimension" [1/30/30]
- (14) "The Parrot in the Pawn-Shop" [1/5/30]
- (15) "A Copy of Burns" [2/27/30]
- (16) "The Devotee of Evil" [3/9/30]
- (17) "The Satyr" [1/31/30]
- (18) "The Planet of the Dead" [4/6/30]
- (19) "The Uncharted Isle" [4/21/30]
- \* "Vizaphmal in Ophiuchus" [plotted 4/30]
- (20) "Marooned in Andromeda" [5/16/30, begun 1/24/30] "An excellent peg for a lot of fantasy, horror, grotesquery and satire."
- (21) "The Root of Ampoi" [5/28/30] "A dud."
- (22) "The Necromantic Tale" [6/23/30]
- (23) "The Immeasurable Horror" [7/13/30]
- (24) "A Voyage to Sfanomoe" [7/17/30] "A sort of favorite with me." He listed it among his best pseudo-scientific yarns.
- (25) "The Door to Saturn" [7/26/30] "This tale is one of my favorites, partly on account of its literary style." "I take out the ms. and read it over, when I am too bored to read anything in my book-cases!"
- (26) "The Red World of Polaris" [late 8/30] "Passably written, but suffer[ing] from triteness of plot." "It was written on several mountain-tops, beneath the thousand-year-old junipers on granite crags; and the giant firs and hemlocks by the margin of sapphire tarns." "Mere words didn't seem to stand up in the presence of those peaks and cliffs. But now, amid the perspective of familiar surroundings, 'The Red World' doesn't seem so bad."
- (27) "Told in the Desert" [?]
- (28) "The Willow Landscape" [9/8/30]
- (29) "A Rendezvous in Averoigne" [9/13/30] "One of my own favorites--in fact, I like it much better than the celebrated 'End of the Story.'"
- \* "The Eggs From Saturn" [begun late 9/30] "[will feature] a realistic local setting for its interplanetary mysteries and horrors."
- \* "The Ocean-World of Alioth" [plotted and begun late 9/30]
- (30) "The Gorgon" [10/2/30]
- (31) "An Offering to the Moon" [10/30] "No great favorite of mine." "Maybe I tried too much for character-study and contrast, to the detriment of the weird atmosphere and the 'action.'"
- (32) "The Kiss of Zoraida" [10/15/30] "An ungodly piece of pseudo-Oriental junk." "Well enough done, with some touches of terrific irony."
- (33) "The Face by the River" [10/30]
- (34) "Like Mohammed's Tomb"

- [10/30]  
 "The Sorceress of Averroigne"  
 [plotted late 10/30]
- (35) "Checkmate" [11/7/30]  
 (36) "The Ghoul" [11/12/30]  
 "The legend is so hideous, that I would not be surprised if there were some mention of it in the *Necronomicon*."
- (37) "A Tale of Sir John Maundeville" [11/16/30] "A good short." "[ 'Sir John' and 'The Ghoul' ] pleased me for their archaism." "The kingdom of Antchar, which I have invented for this tale, is even more unwholesome, if possible, than Averroigne."
- (38) "An Adventure in Futurity" [12/27/30] "An awful piece of junk."
- (39) "The Justice of the Elephant" [12/29/30]  
 (40) "The Return of the Sorcerer" [1/6/31] "An 'original plot; but it seems to need some additional atmospheric development."
- (41) "The City of the Singing Flame" [1/15/31] "Some day I must look for those two boulders. . . If you and other correspondents cease to hear from me, you can surmise what has happened!"
- \* "A Tale of Gnydrion" [plotted 2/31] Note: *Zothique* conceived.
- (42) "A Good Embalmer" [2/7/31] "Have spent three days over a six-page horror. . . It is not in my natural genre, and may not even have the dubious merit of being salable." "[It] should take the palm for macabre grotesquery."
- (43) "The Testament of Athammaus" [1/22/31, plotted 4/30] "I shall feel rather peeved if Wright turns it down; since it is about as good as I can do in the line of unearthly horror." "I really think he (or it) is about my best monster to date."
- (44) "The Amazing Planet (A Captivity in Serpens)" [3/31, begun 11/30] "I'll give them their 'action' this time!!!"
- (45) "The Letter from Mohaun Los" [4/9/31]  
 (46) "The Hunters from Beyond" [4/28/31] "I'm none too fond of the story." "Doesn't please me very well--the integral mood seems a little secondary, probably because the modern treatment is rather uncongenial for me."
- (47) "The Holiness of Azedarac" [5/21/31] "The plot maketh rather a merrie tale, methinks."
- (48) "The Maker of Gargoyles" [6/16/31]  
 (49) "Beyond the Singing Flame" [6/30/31] "Strikes me as the best thing I have done recently."
- (50) "Seedling of Mars (The Martian)" [7/20/31] "A pretty fair scientific fictional opus."
- \* "The Master of Destruction" [plotted 8/31] "It ought to make a thriller."
- (51) "The Vaults of Yoh-Vombis" [9/12/31] "A rather ambitious hunk of extra-planetary weirdness." "The interplanetary angle . . . adds considerably to the interest." In October 1932 Smith submitted "Yoh-Vombis" (and "Empire of the Necromancers") to an anthology, as examples of his best work.
- \* "The Rebirth of the Flame" [plotted before 9/22/31]  
 (52) "The Eternal World" [9/27/31] "The best and most original of my super-scientific tales, so

- far." "The toughest job I have ever attempted." "Gernsback took 'The Eternal World,' but advised me to put 'more realism' into my future stories, saying that the late ones were 'verging dangerously on the weird.' That's really quite a josh--as well as a compliment."
- (53) "The Demon of the Flower" [10/17/31] Smith had considered including this in The Double Shadow, as one of his best stories not sold to magazines.
- \* "Slaves of the Black Pillar" [plotted and begun 10/31]
- (54) "The Nameless Offspring" [11/12/31, plotted 1/31] "The plot is about as diabolic as anything I am ever likely to devise." This work was inspired by Machen's "The Great God Pan."
- (55) "A Vintage from Atlantis" [11/31] "It is far from bad."
- (56) "The Weird of Avoosl Wuthoquan" [11/25/31]
- (57) "The Invisible City" [12/15/31] "A hunk of tripe . . . Not enough atmosphere to make it good--and too many unexplained mysteries for the sciencefiction readers, who simply must have their formulae . . . am pretty thoroughly disgusted by it." "So punk that I don't want to show it to anyone."
- (58) "The Immortals of Mercury" [1/19/32] "A lot of tripe, I'm afraid; but if it brings me a 200.00 dollar check, will have served its purpose."
- (59) "The Empire of the Necromancers" [1/7/32] "A tale which pleased me considerably." "There is a queer mood in this little tale . . . it is much overgreened with what H. P. once referred to as the 'verdigris of decadence.'"
- (60) "The Seed from the Sepulcher" [2/32] "[I like it] for its imaginative touches, but am going to chuck the malignant plant idea after this. I don't want to run it into the ground!"
- (61) "The Second Interment" [1/29/32]
- (62) "Ubbo-Sathla" [2/15/32]
- (63) "The Double Shadow" [3/14/32]
- (64) "The Plutonian Drug" [4/5/32] "Among my best in the field of science-fiction." "It was certainly tough writing, and I'm still a little groggy." "Hellishly hard to do."
- (65) "The Supernumerary Corpse" [4/10/32, plotted 11/30]
- (66) "The Master of the Asteroid" [6/9/32]
- (67) "The Colossus of Ylourgne" [5/1/32] "Others have commended the tale, so I begin to think that perhaps I have underestimated it." "[It has a] striking plot."
- (68) "The Mandrakes" [5/15/32] "Not a very important item."
- (69) "The Beast of Averoigne" [6/18/32] "Rather good--tersé, grim, and devilishly horrible." "I think that I have done better tales, but few that are technically superior."
- (70) "A Star-Change" [6/32, plotted 10/30] "A whale of an idea." "A high-grade science-fiction tale." "'A Star-Change' is more realistic [than 'The Light from Beyond'], but, in my estimation, is equally good. As far as I know it is the only attempt to convey the profound disturbance of function and sensation that would inevitably be experienced by a human being on an alien world."
- (71) "The Disinterment of Venus" [7/32, plotted 6/31] "A rather

- unimportant piece." "This, of all my recent tales, will be hardest to sell, since it combines the risqué and the ghastly." "Rather a wicked story."
- (72) "The White Sybil" [7/14/32]
- (73) "The Ice-Demon" [7/22/32]  
"Well written. But I had to work it over so much that it went stale on me, somehow."
- (74) "The Isle of the Torturers" [7/31/32] "The best of the summer's crop . . . a strange mixture of eeriness, grotesquery, bright color, cruelty, and stark human tragedy."  
"One of my own favorites."
- (75) "The Dimension of Chance" [8/32] "Probably better as a satire than anything else."
- (76) "The Dweller in the Gulf" [8/32] Smith had bad luck with this story. He considered it "a first-rate interplanetary horror, sans the hokum of pseudo-explanation," and yet to sell it on second submission he was forced to add a character (John Chalmers) to provide just such hokum. "The tale has a magnificent Dantesque ending," which was hacked apart by Hugo Gernsback himself when it appeared in Wonder Stories.
- (77) "The Maze of Maal Dweb" [9/32] "Ultra-fantastic, full-hued and ingenious, with an extra twist or two in the tail for luck." The title was originally "The Maze of Mool Dweb," but Smith felt that "Māal Dweb -- two syllables -- would be preferable perhaps, for tone-color, etc." After finalizing this title, he indulged in a bit of self-praise: "I think it should be admitted that some of my nomenclature achieves certain nuances of suggestive and atmospheric associative value."
- (78) "The Third Episode of Vathek" [9/16/32] "I really think the ending is one of the best pieces of work I have done lately."
- (79) "Genius Loci" [9/26/32]  
"An experiment for me . . . It was damnably hard to do, and I am not certain of my success. I am even less certain of being able to sell it to any editor--it will be too subtle for the pulps, and the high-brows won't like the supernatural element."
- (80) "The Light from Beyond" [10/31/32, plotted 8/31]  
"First-rate."
- (81) "The Charnal God" [11/15/32]  
"A devil of a yarn--necromancy, involution, necrophilism and necrophagy--but strictly moral at the end, since the foul necromancers get it in the neck." "For my taste, it has a little too much plot and not enough atmosphere."
- (83) "The Dark Eidolon" [12/23/32]  
"A devil of a story, and if Wright knows his mandrakes, he certainly ought to take it on. If the thing could ever be filmed . . . it might be a winner for diabolic drama and infernal spectacles." "Contains some of my best imaginative writing."
- (84) "The Voyage of King Euvoran" [1/33]
- (82) "Vulthoom" [2/14/33, begun 10/32] "Fails to please me." "[It] seems to have pleased [Wright] for some ungodly reason; but after all it's a cut or two above Edmond Hamilton."
- (85) "The Weaver in the Vault" [3/14/33] "I like the tale myself, particularly some of the atmospheric touches."
- \*(90) "The Infernal Star" [begun

- early 3/33]
- (86) "The Flower-Women" [3/33, begun 10/32]
- (87) "The Dark Age" [4/33]  
 "My lousiest in many moons, largely no doubt, because of the non-fantastic plot, which failed to engage my interest at any point. The one redeeming feature is the final paragraph, which takes a sly, underhanded crack at the benefits (?) of science."
- (89) "The Death of Malygris" [4/33]
- (91) "The Tomb-Spawn" [begun 7/33]  
 \* "The House of Haon-Dor" [begun 7/33]
- (92) "The Witchcraft of Ulua" [8/22/33] "I feel that it is well-written; and it gives a certain variant note to my series of tales dealing with Zothique." "Erotic imagery was employed in the tale merely to achieve a more varied sensation of weirdness." "I wouldn't have had the originality to write it a few years back."
- (93) "The Coming of the White Worm" [9/15/33] "A tale that I am inclined to favour in my own estimation." "It [was] hard to do, like most of my tales, because of the peculiar and carefully maintained style and tone-colour, which involves rejection of many words, images and locutions that might ordinarily be employed in writing."
- (94) "The Seven Geases" [10/1/33] "Outrageously grotesque, sardonic and satiric." "I am rather partial to that opus. These grotesque and elaborate ironies come all too naturally to me, I fear."
- (88) "The Chain of Aforgomon" [1/34, begun 4/33] "A devil-
- ishly hard yarn to write . . . a most infernal chore, since the original inspiration seems to have gone cold, leaving the tale as immalleable as chilled iron."
- (95) "The Primal City" [1/34]  
 \* "The Scarlet Egg" [begun 3/34]
- (96) "Xeethra" [3/21/34, plotted 8/33 or before]
- (97) "The Last Heirotglyph" [4/7/34] "A whale of a weird notion."
- \* (98) "Shapes of Adamant" [?]
- (99) "Necromancy in Naat!" [2/6/35] "Seems the best of my more recently published weirds; though Wright forced me to mutilate the ending\*\*\*\*\*"
- (100) "The Treader of the Dust" [2/15/35]
- (101) "The Black Abbott of Puthuum" [before 4/35]
- (102) "The Death of Ilalotha" [3/16/37] "Quite good, I believe, especially in style and atmosphere. It is unusually poisonous and exotic." "I seem to have slipped something over on the PTA."
- (103) "Mother of Toads" [3/20/37, begun ca. 5/35] "A passable weird, with a sufficiently horrific ending."
- (104) "The Garden of Adompha" [7/31/37] "A tale which I am inclined to like."
- \* (105) "The Great God Awto" [begun 9/37? (published 2/40)]
- (106) "Strange Shadows" [begun 3/40?] "A later version, 'I Am Your Shadow,' may have been completed 11/41."
- (107) "The Enchantress of Sylaire" [? (published 7/41)]
- (108) "Double Cosmos" [3/24/40 (penultimate version), begun 3/34]
- (109) "Dawn of Discord" [? (E. H. Price's rewrite published 1939

or 1940)]

(110) "House of the Monoceros"  
[? (Price's rewrite published  
2/41)]

\* "The Painter in Darkness"  
[begun 7/46]

"Nemesis of the Unfinished" [7/30/47  
(first version)]

(111) "The Master of the Crabs"  
[8/3/47]

\*(112) "Eviction by Night" [?]

"Morthylla" [(9 or 10)/52]

"Schizoid Creator" [(9 or 10)/52]

"Monsters in the Night" [4/11/53]

"Phoenix" [1953 (published 11/53)]

"The Theft of Thirty-Nine Girdles"  
[4/57, begun 10/52]

"Symposium of the Gordon" [8/5/57]

"The Dart of Rasasfa" [7/21/61]

#### ADDENDUM

The following synopses or incomplete stories are "major," but either cannot be dated, or have only very unrestrictive bounds on date of composition:

\* "In a Hashish-Dream/A Tale of Hashish-Land" [begun in 1920s]

\* "Asharia: A Tale of the Lost Planet" [plotted before 1/32]  
"Has great possibilities, I feel."

\* "The Minotaur's Brother" [plotted after 5/26/35]

\* "Offspring of the Grave" [plotted after 5/26/35]

\* "I Am a Witch" [plotted after 3/16/37]

\* "Mandor's Enemy" [begun in early 1950s]

\* "The Wink and the Chuckle" [begun before 4/53]

\* "Chincharro" [begun after "The Wink and the Chuckle"]

\* "Mnemoka" [begun in 1950s]

\* "Unquiet Boundary" [begun in 1950s]

\* "Djinn Without a Bottle" [begun in

1950s]

\* "Beyond the Rose-Arbor" [?]

\* "Maker of Prodigies" [?]

\* "Music of Death" [?]

\* "Queen of the Sabbath" [?]

#### MAIL-CALL OF CTHULHU

(continued from page 52)

"limp-wristed" story--a puzzling statement, since to my mind the philosophical position expressed in the tale (that art and music are of greater worth to the human spirit than the plodding grind of manual labor) seems to me a perfectly sensible and rational one; and if Mr. Lane would read the story more carefully, he would find some very nasty satire on the Protestant Work Ethic in the tale. The prose is some of the most musical in all Lovecraft, I think.

--S. T. Joshi

Jersey City, NJ

Regarding Joel D. Lane's remarks concerning HPL and homosexual undertones in his fiction. For at least one instance that he cites, the handsome young man with "the fascination of a dark god or fallen archangel" (from the Dream-Quest), one can point to a literary source. As I've shown in my article comparing the two works, HPL was greatly influenced in writing the Dream-Quest by William Beckford's Vathek. An uninhibited homosexual, Beckford consciously stocked his novel with attractive young men. I suspect the naive Lovecraft derived the image of the boyish Nyarlathotep from Beckford, without realizing the homoerotic implications.

--Peter Cannon

New York, NY



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# The Feaster from the Stars

By Clark Ashton Smith and Lin Carter

## I.

The Lord Vooth Raluorn, a member of the minor nobility of Hyperborea and twenty-ninth hereditary High Constable of Commoriom, succeeded to his inheritance at an unusually premature age, when his father, an inveterate huntsman, succumbed to the fangs and claws of one of the lesser dinosauria. As his official duties were largely ceremonial, Vooth Raluorn enjoyed both the leisure and the income to indulge in his principal enthusiasm, which was the perusal of antique grimoires and the mastery of the arts of wizardry. In this hobby, he was assisted, albeit posthumously, by his grandsire, for the twenty-seventh hereditary High Constable had been unremitting in his persecution of the interdicted cultus of the demon Tsathoggua and his loathly ilk, and his tireless persecutions had resulted in the accumulation of an enviable library of sorcerous tomes.

His leisure thus divided between scholarly pursuits and the lascivious pleasures of his rank, Vooth Raluorn luxuriated in the best of both the intellectual and the voluptuous spheres, and from these studies and pleasures he was but infrequently roused by the call of his constabulatory duties. One such occasion took place early in the reign of Queen Luthomne: a conventicle of demon-worshippers having been discovered in the southernmost suburb of the capital, Vooth Raluorn was forced to extricate himself from the embrace of his leman, the supple-limbed and sable-tressed Ysabau, in order to respond to the call of duty.

The demon-worshippers, it seemed, had ensconced themselves in an abandoned manse which reared its terraces on the esplanade of the Yrautrom canal, where they engaged furtively in their unlawful rituals during those seasons of the year when the star Algol is in the ascendant. Accompanying the constabulary troop, in order to lend the legality of his office to their nocturnal raid, Vooth Raluorn was among the first to gain entry to the semi-ruinous edifice, and while the robed celebrants were bound and searched, he examined with interest the altarlike tablestone which stood at the centre-most portion of the vault in which they had conducted their liturgical blasphemies. It was strewn with a number of interesting ritual objects, unique among these being a singularly abhorrent eidolon hewn from glinting obsidian, which depicted a swagbellied and corpulent entity with batlike wings and the splay-footed hindlegs of a monstrous toad. Face it had none, save for a grisly beard of slithering tentacles which obtruded from the frontal portions of its repellantly mis-shapen skull.

Before accompanying his raiding-party and their prisoners to the nearest gaol, Vooth Raluorn revoltedly shattered the eidolon to ringing shards with the bronze-shod maul of his office.

This action, as it eventuated, was exceedingly unwise. Returning at length to the arms of his concubine, the High Constable found himself unable to rekindle the fiery ardour he had known earlier on that memorable

evening, and became increasingly aware of a curious mixture of listlessness and uneasy excitation which neither the honeyed lips of Ysabbaun nor the bitter lees of the winecup could seemingly assuage.

Nightly thereafter were the dreams of Vooth Raluorn made hideous by an umbral apparition of menacing aspect which resembled in every detail the repellant idol he had so imprudently riven asunder. None of the wizardly volumes in the library of his grandsire served to render again wholesome his slumbers, and even though Vooth Raluorn dared employ the redoubtable exorcisms of Pnom, at first the Lesser and then in turn the Greater, he found no means whereby to extirpate the shadowy and obscene apparition from his dreams.

With despair and more than considerable trepidation, Vooth Raluorn at length consulted those of his colleagues in the Art Sorcerous with whom his relations were mutually friendly. One such, a saintly septuagenarian yclept Zongis Furalor, succeeded in identifying the cult-object as an image wrought in the likeness of a demonic entity whose name among men was Zvilpogghua; so obscure was the repute of this demon, that Vooth Raluorn had never heretofore encountered aught concerning him in the grimoires and testaments available for his perusal, but Zongis Furalor abstracted from his folios a painted likeness of the demon which the High Constable shudderingly recognized as identical with the shadow-shape which had for nights rendered his dreams unspeakably noxious.

Alas, his wizardly colleague either knew little concerning the demon or refused to impart his knowledge thereof; he had, however, a word of advice for the hapless Vooth

Raluorn. It seemed that the cult which had worshipped Zvilpogghua (until such time as the surviving members of the conventicle had perished by impalement, due to the swift justice of Queen Luthomne's ecclesiastical courts) had formerly counted among their number a renegade named Yzduggor, who, for whatever reason, had quitted their body some years ago, to take up the life of a penitent eremite among the steep slopes of the black Eiglophian Mountains. Of the wise Yzduggor, whom the wizards of Commorion held in the highest repute, it was rumored that he, as a former devotee of the obsolete and interdicted cultus of Zvilpogghua, was privy to the sacred lore of that entity, and moreover, that Zvilpogghua, as firstborn of the spawn of dreaded Tsathoggua, begotten by the Black Thing upon a female entity named Shathak on far and frozen Yaksh the seventh world, was a demonic personage of the most primordial lineage, and very greatly to be feared.

Thereupon, and without dalliance, did the dream-haunted Vooth Raluorn forthwith elude to the Eiglophians, in search of the remote and secluded dwelling of this Yzduggor.

## II.

In these central regions of the continent, the land grew wild and perilous, and it was only prudent of the High Constable to venture thither accompanied by two stout guards of his retinue, Yanur and Tsangth. They journeyed, clad in garments of saurian-leather with accouterments of bronze, and both warriors bristled with blades and barbs, for fear of the furry and prehuman Voormis who haunted the peaks, to say nothing of the monstrous catobleps of the mires.

Indeed, the unlucky Tsangth fell prey to the scythe-clawed catobleps during their traversal of a swampy region, and the doughty Yanur perished in combat with the furtive Voormis, leaving the young noble with naught to depend on save his own wizardry and the strength of his adamantine scimitar, whose tang was sunk in a grip carved from mastodon ivory.

Alone and unaided did Vooth Raluorn assail the glassy scarps of volcanic obsidian, the scoriac cliffs of time-riven basalt, avoiding the fumaroles and crevasses wherein might well lurk not only the savage Voormis, but the cockatrices and basilisks rumored to favor such darksome lairs.

Above him as he toiled upwards towards the cell of the repentant eremite, the cloudless blue ascended to a zenith of flawless sapphire. With difficulty, he made safe crossing of beds of black lava like motionless rivers of stony knives, and, entering upon a scruffy stand of gnarled junipers, which meagerly flourished from patches of fetid black loam, he entered a narrow cleft between vast, tumbled blocks of levin-shattered basaltic boulders, huge as the toy blocks abandoned by the careless hands of Titan-children.

Through this winding and tenebrous labyrinth he went, finding himself at last upon a flat and level tableland where a tongue of rock thrust out over a vertiginous and bottomless abyss. Thereupon he spied a hovel whose walls were made of boardings hewn from Jurassic conifers, roofed over by the palm-like fronds of cycads. Before this miserable hut, upon a bed of sanguine coals, a cauldron of black iron steamed and bubbled.

And crouched upon the door-stoop, he spied a gaunt and wretched figure,

mummy-thin to the point of emaciation, wrinkled flesh umber of hue between patches of ancient filth, wearing naught but the reeking hide of a Voormis knotted about skeletal loins. With a friendly halloo, the High Constable approached the eremite and addressed him by name. But to this friendly greeting the lean hermit returned no reply, not even deigning to recognize the approach of a fellow-human. Thin lips revealing all-but-toothless gums, where yet remained the discolored stump of a worn fang or two, mumbling prayers or adjurations in a hoarse and croaking voice, the eremite continued at his devotions, ignoring the very presence of the young noble, and all the while with talon-thin fingers he counted the beads of an uncouth rosary seemingly fashioned from human knuckle-bones.

At length, his devotions concluded, Yzduggor, for it was in sooth he, granted his supplicant the benison of a sour glance of unwelcome from yellow eyes bleared with rheum. Undaunted, Vooth Raluorn opened his leathern wallet and produced those gifts he had hopefully assumed one so long sequestered in this wilderness, far from the habitation of men, might covet above all else: dried meats, sweet jellies, ripe swamp-fruits, a fat black bottle of fire-hearted brandy from Uzuldaroum, and a bag of fragrant snuff. One by one he laid these offerings before the bare, and bony, and very dirty, feet of the eremite.

His choices proved apt and quite welcome, for the claw-like hands snatched and tore at the luscious delicacies, and while Yzduggor guzzled and slobbered in the most disgusting of manners, the young wizard explained the reason which had prompted this visit and implored the assistance of the former devotee of

Zvilpogghua.

His appetite appeased, the eremite at length yielded grudging reply to his entreaties, and ere long did the young Commorian learn from Yzduggor's reluctant lips that presently Zvilpogghua resided on far and frozen Ymar, a world circumambient about the green star Algol, and might be called down to this world by his worshippers during those months of the year when the constellation Perseus is in the heavens, whereupon it is his grisly wont to feed upon the flesh and to drink of the blood of men, wherefore is he known to sorcerers as the Feaster from the Stars.

"Very malign and unforgiving is Zvilpogghua," quoth Yzduggor in harsh and ruminative tones to the young wizard, "and beware lest you incur his wrath or ire, for he is wise and old and cunning, and not of a charitable nature."

Therefollowing, he advised his visitor to do thus-and-so which might avert the vengeance of the Son of Tsathoggua. "Or might not," added the hermit with an enigmatic chuckle.

### III.

His return from the Eiglophian range was more difficult and hazardous than had been the way thither, lacking his two stalwart guards. Vooth Raluorn was forced to lone battle against the beasts of forest and swamp, with his wizardry and his swordsmanship, and fortunately he came out of each contest the victor. Returning home to the ancient house of his ancestors, he dispatched pages and servitors to purchase the requisites for the formula recommended by the eremite.

This involved considerable expense, as it required rare spices, costly perfumes, expensive chemicals, dangerous narcotics, and such

valuable admixtures as powdered dust of opals and the tears of the hippogriff; fortunately for his coffers, Vooth Raluorn was enabled to procure several of these constituents at cost, as his closest relative, his nephew and heir, Nungis Avargomon, had been reduced by poverty to trading in rare substances required by wizards.

With all ready to hand, the sun westering, Perseus in the ascendant and Algol a fervent eye of green fire in the firmament, the young wizard repaired to a hilltop in the precincts athwart his manse, hitherto occupied only by tombs and sepulchres, and prepared to exorcise forever the demonic entity whose disapproval he had, however accidentally, incurred.

He traced the circles and built the fire and cast thereinto the required substances. Vapors occulted the moon's cold eye, but Algol glared burningly down upon the scene. With cold globules of perspiration bedewing his furrowed brow, Vooth Raluorn intoned the versicles recommended by the eremite. A silence fell upon the gloom-shrouded eminence; the wind died; cold stars leered down from above.

#### A black shadow descended.

Swag-bellied, toad-like, with batwings and splayed, webbed feet it was; entirely lacking in forelimbs, the head featureless, a writhing mass of tentacles or feelers, the obscene black shape swept down on the huddled, shrieking form on the headland, and bore it aloft in webbed claws. Nor was it ever again seen by mortal men.

\*

And far to the south, beyond jungle and swamp, foothills and mountains, on a spar of jutting rock where stood a crude hovel, a gaunt and fam-

ished eremite groveled before a crude image.

"Yet one more offering, Lord Zvilpogghua," the mummy-thin hermit whined. "I eliminated one precious ingredient from the formula, to thy power and glory. Grant me forgiveness for having deserted thy coventicle; there will be other offerings, I vow . . ."

And, months later, in Commorion to the north, a certain impoverished scion of the lesser nobility, one Nungis Avargomon, was delighted beyond belief to learn that he was declared by the courts to be the sole and complete heir of the missing Vooth Raluorn, and became possessor of the ancestral estate and inheritor of the thirtieth High Constablenesship of Commorion.

And all that he had done was to cheat on the powdered opals.

#### NOTES:

1. The title is one coined by Lovecraft and ascribed to his imaginary author "Robert Blake," in "The Haunter of the Dark." It's a shame to let a good title go to waste.
2. The story itself derives from a plot-idea of Smith's which is not in The Black Book but was discovered by myself scribbled on the back of one of Smith's holograph manuscripts: "When a magistrate, condemning to death the members of an illicit cult of devil-worshippers, gratuitously shatters the idol of their god, he incurs its wrath. When all of the cultists are executed, the demon must exact its own vengeance on the magistrate." Note that I have only slightly altered this, making the lead character a High Constable, rather than a magistrate, in order to avoid too close a par-

allel to "The Seven Geases."

3. "Yzduggor" and "Vooth Raluorn" are names coined by Smith, which appear in his notes for the story eventually published as "The Seven Geases." In his final version of the text these names were changed to "Ezdagor" and "Rali-bar Vooz." I hate to let good names go to waste, too.
4. It was Lovecraft who came up with the notion of a "Child of Tsathoggua" in his excerpt from Of Evil Sorceries, one of the fragments which Derleth incorporated into The Lurker at the Threshold. HPL failed to specify its gender. In his "Genealogical Chart" excerpted from a 1934 letter to Barlow and published in Planets and Dimensions, Smith gives "Zvilpogghua" as the name of Tsathoggua's only listed child. He also adds the information that the child was begotten on a female entity named Shathak upon the planet Yaksh (Neptune) by Tsathoggua, before he descended to this earth. In lieu of contradictory data, I presume Zvilpogghua to be male.
5. "Luthomne," "Yrautrom," "Ysabau," "Zongis Furalor," "Yanur," etc. All of these names were coined by Smith and listed for future use in his notes.
6. Please note that of the twenty-four proper nouns in this story, only one (Ymar) was invented by myself.

--Lin Carter

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# CAS & Divers Hands

IDEAS OF LOVECRAFT AND OTHERS IN SMITH'S FICTION

By Steve Behrends

Considering that Clark Ashton Smith corresponded for years with several of the finest minds in weird fiction, it shouldn't surprise us to learn that some of the ideas and images we encounter in his stories are not his own. Smith regularly mailed manuscripts to his friends Lovecraft, Derleth and Wandrei, and took much of their criticism to heart; but suggestions came also from his editors, and from the Auburn acquaintances to whom he would show his early drafts.

By far the greatest influence was exercised by Lovecraft, reflecting both that writer's intense interest in the theory and structure of fantastic stories, as well as his own great imaginative powers. A handful of examples of Lovecraft's hand in Smith's stories are documented in the Selected Letters volumes, and references in Smith's letters to HPL hint at a few more. We will first list these examples, then examine influences from other sources.

In a letter to HPL dated November 23, 1930, Smith outlined a plot-germ that was to grow into "The Return of the Sorcerer," involving a murderer who dismembered his victim and is being haunted by the severed parts of the corpse. Lovecraft thought to provide an explanation for the haunting, and simultaneously to expand the story's scope, by introducing a sorcerous background for the two men. This suggestion was adopted by Smith and led eventually to the introduction of the Necronomicon into the tale. Around the same time, HPL supplied Smith with the

idea of finding an ancient manuscript in English and in one's own hand, before he had incorporated it into "The Shadow out of Time" (see Selected Letter #440). Smith included this idea in his unfinished novelette, "The Master of Destruction," and may have been deterred from completing the yarn, in part, because Lovecraft had gotten around to using the notion himself! And it may be, as Derleth points out in his footnote to Selected Letter #673 (November 29, 1933), that a dream of Lovecraft's inspired "The Treader of the Dust," completed February 15, 1935.

An in-joke in Smith's "The Necromantic Tale" revolves around another suggestion from HPL. The main character in the story, a Sir Roderick, is spiritually linked to an ancestor who was burned at the stake. He reads a record of the crimes and punishment of this ancestor, his consciousness is propelled backward, he experiences the burning death, and awakens from the "dream" to find that his ankles are scorched. Lovecraft mentioned to Smith that he might have people in the crowd swear they'd seen the figure at the stake disappear, and that this "rumor" might make it into the old record that the contemporary Sir Roderick reads. Smith loved this suggestion, thinking that it "made" the story. So, if you crack open your copy of Other Dimensions, you'll find that in the story this "rumor" was amended to the old document . . . but we're told the amendment had been written in "a finer hand than the rest" (this could refer to Lovecraft's

notoriously small handwriting, or Smith may have been tipping his hat to the elder writer).

The extant HPL-CAS correspondence also records that Smith chose not to accept Lovecraft's proposed ending for "A Star Change." In this tale a man is whisked to a far, alien world, where he suffers unspeakable torment at the strange sights and sensations. His hosts perform an operation which transfigures his senses, permitting him to tolerate his surroundings. He eventually escapes to the earth, where these new sense-abilities cause him to perceive everything around him with horror. On the margin of the letter (ca. early October 1930) wherein Smith outlined the plight of the main character, HPL jotted down "Have him find what he thinks to be an utterly strange and hideous planet--recognizing it as the earth (except for vaguely disquieting suggestions of familiarity) only at the last," and passed this on to Smith in Selected Letter #439. However, in the story as Smith wrote it, the hero understands from the first that he has reached the earth.

Beyond Lovecraft, a few other instances are known in which Smith took the advice of others for his fiction. The horrific spice added to the end of "The Resurrection of the Rattlesnake"--finding bloody rattles in the author's fist--came from a girlfriend. Harry Bates, editor of Strange Tales, suggested the repetition of the premature burial in "The Second Interment." The central idea for his unfinished "The House of Haon-Dor" came from a correspondent, who told him of a haunted shack in Oceanside (see the note in Untold Tales to the "Haon-Dor" fragment). "The basic idea of ["The Dimension

of Chance"]--the random atoms, etc.--was suggested by the [Wonder Stories] editor" (CAS to AWD, November 15, 1932). And unknown modifications to the ending of "The Maker of Gargoyles" came from Derleth.

On the opposite end of the stick, CAS offered criticism and plot-twists to his group of pen-pals for stories like "The Return of Hastur," "The Shadow over Innsmouth," and "The Lives of Alfred Kramer," but it seems that his offerings fell usually on deaf ears. In all likelihood, Derleth was too haughty to consider making any changes to his work, and Lovecraft was probably too depressed . . .

In an article of this sort it seems natural to mention for completeness Smith's acknowledged collaborations, of which there are three. "The Third Episode of Vathek," with William Beckford, represents a story completed by Smith, with no actual collaboration. Smith added 4,000 words to the tale, writing without a synopsis, although he felt "the development Beckford had intended is obvious enough" (CAS to AWD September 11, 1932). For "Seedling of Mars/The Planet Entity," as by Smith and E. M. Johnston, he worked with a plot by Johnston entitled "The Martian," which had won second place in the Wonder Stories Quarterly interstellar plot contest (I wonder who and what won first?)--the Quarterly commissioned Smith to write a story around it. And for "The Nemesis of the Unfinished," evidence indicates that Smith first fleshed out one version of this story from a sketch by Don Carter, and later went on to write a variant version of his own devising, keeping only the character of the frustrated writer (see the note to this story in Untold Tales).



# The Price - Smith Collaborations

By Will Murray

E. Hoffmann Price is uniquely distinguished among members of the so-called "Lovecraft Circle" in one important respect; he was the only writer to collaborate with both H. P. Lovecraft and Clark Ashton Smith. This fact is not generally known even among Smith aficionados even though there were two published Price-Smith collaborations to the single Price-Lovecraft story.

The story Price wrote with H. P. Lovecraft is, of course, the famous sequel to Lovecraft's own "The Silver Key" titled "Through the Gates of the Silver Key." It was written by Price originally, but Lovecraft rewrote a significant portion of the story before it appeared in the July 1934 Weird Tales under a double by-line. Although according to technique one of Lovecraft's revisions, the result was so Lovecraftian that it is grouped with the rest of his canon.

It is practically the opposite with the Price-Smith stories. Here it was Price who revised the Smith stories, sold them as his own, and took complete credit for himself. This was just as Smith wished it. The story behind this unusual arrangement is this: in 1940, Smith turned over to Price two stories the former had been unable to sell as written. As reported in Roy A. Squires' article, "The Fiction of Clark Ashton Smith" (Nyctalops #7), the stories were "Dawn of Discord" and "House of the Monoceros." Both stories were given to Price with the explicit understanding that Price revise them and sell them where he could. Possibly there was a financial arrangement attendant to this. In

any case, Squires reported that "House of the Monoceros" appeared in the February 1941 issue of Culture Publications' Spicy Mystery Stories as "The Old Gods Eat" but that the fate of the first story was unknown.

In fact, "Dawn of Discord" was also sold to Spicy Mystery Stories, where it was printed in the October 1940 issue as--"Dawn of Discord!" Spicy Mystery was the weird magazine of the Spicy line, which also included Spicy Detective, Spicy-Adventure and Spicy Western Stories. All four magazines were among Price's steadiest fiction markets. His work for the line is well-represented in Carcosa's Price collection, Far Lands, Other Days, which includes a reprint of "The Old Gods Eat" (under its original title "House of the Monoceros"!)). As a group, the Spicy pulps were light reading, mildly risqué, and so stylistically homogenized that even if Clark Ashton Smith had considered selling his work there, his vocabulary alone would have made that impossible (although Smith's marked sexual themes would have been perfectly at home in the pages of the Spicies). Accordingly, E. Hoffmann Price's reworking of both stories had to be extensive, so extensive that it amounted to a salvage job.

"Dawn of Discord" superficially resembles one of Smith's straight science fiction stories. John King, disturbed by the outbreak of World War II, has developed an unique approach to abolishing war:

War, King had reasoned, was an insane habit that some bird-

brained primitive had devised as a substitute for judgment or intelligence; and thus, a man of the twentieth century, without any illusions as to the glory of strife, might direct the first warrior chief into a happier channel. If these people of the Golden Age, drunk by the novelty of Iron and Power, could see what evolution had finally made of war, they might sober up. War had once been an adventure, but it had long since lost whatever redeeming quality it had possessed.

Armed with this dubious pacifist philosophy, King builds a bathysphere-shaped time machine and sets the dials for this "dawn of discord," and just happens to land near the city of Jhagger just as it is coming under the evil sway of the first warlord in history, Jurth. Jurth controls an army equipped with telepathic wristbands, paralysis scepters, and iron tridents. Having taken over Jhagger, Jurth is sweeping the countryside, looting other settlements and taking prisoners. One of them, a blonde slave-girl named Ania, is the first person King encounters. She's escaped the city, and when Jurth and his boys come along, King has to tangle with them. In hand-to-hand combat with Jurth, the formerly peaceful King finds himself enjoying the battle. He can't figure it out, not even after he loses the fight and ends up in the prison turret of Jurth's castle. Ania escapes. While in the cell, King is visited by the black-haired Foma, who describes herself as "one of Jurth's discarded wives." The bewitching Foma throws herself on the doubtful scientist--and having nothing better to do, King doesn't turn her down. Their dalliance takes place, in true "Spicy" style, offstage.

But it turns out that Foma is only trying to wrest the secret of time-travel from King. Failing that, Foma is beaten and King tortured. Enter Ania to the rescue. But there are complications. These include mutual antagonism between Ania and Foma (who has turned against Jurth and really wants to hook up with King this time), King's discovery of Jurth's "infra-sonic war-vibration machine," which is causing all the strife in the Golden Age, and the effect that machine is having on King's mental balance. He decides to wreck the machine and assassinate Jurth for the good of future generations.

This story is so trite, it's impossible to destroy the surprise by revealing the ending. King fails to accomplish either of his aims, and just as he's about to take Ania back with him to the present, she and the sultry Foma get into a cat fight. King leaves without either of them, gives up his pacifistic ideas, and decides to go after the shapely blonde who works in a nearby office. End of story.

Not a shred of Clark Ashton Smith's actual writing seems to have survived the revision. Unless you count the word "alembic," that is. Most likely, Price took the idea, some of the plot development and characters, and retold the story in his own style. The one thing we can say about Smith's original story is that it clearly betrayed his concern over the conflict then breaking out in Europe. The hero's failure is rather Smithesque as well.

One of the chief elements Price seems to have introduced into "Dawn of Discord" was the conflict between the virginal blonde and the dark-haired temptress. This is also standard "Spicy" material. In fact, it's central to "The Old Gods Eat" as well.

"The Old Gods Eat" is even more removed from Smith's oeuvre than the other story. It is essentially a hard-boiled private eye yarn set in England and laced with a wisp of fantasy. Detective Jim Dale tells the story in tough, first-person style. He's called to the surf-pounded Cornwall town of Pengyl by Lord Treganneth because, as he explains, "A monster was eating the peasants."

Not a monster, really. A monoceros. A sea creature with a unicorn's forehead spike. Peasants have been disappearing from the area of Lord Treganneth's castle. They blame him because his ancestors were Druids who sacrificed people to the monoceros in olden days. Dale doesn't believe a word of it, but then the Lord's dark-tressed housekeeper, Emily Polgate, leads him into the castle cellar, and in the pit where the monoceros was originally kept he sees something vague and phantasmal, but with a pronounced horn. The ghost of the monoceros? Dale thinks it's something he ate, or that it was done with mirrors.

But the peasants keep disappearing. Dale sees one being led to his doom by a dancing nude blonde. Is she the same unclothed girl he discovers imprisoned in a turret cell (yes, another turret cell) who claims to be Diane Rolley, Treganneth's secretary? She tells the confused Dale that the Lord is keeping her a prisoner until the monoceros business is over with, after which they will wed. Dale is very suspicious. But he needn't have been if he had read back issues of Spicy Mystery Stories. Blondes are never--or almost never--the guilty party in a Spicy story, especially when a black-haired wench lurks somewhere in the plot.

The story ends in the expected cat fight. Emily falls over the wall

coping and ends up impaled on the horn of the ancient skeleton of the monoceros. But both Diane and Jim Dale know they've twice seen a very much alive monoceros in that foggy pit.

Once again, little remains of Smith's distinctive style, unless you care to count the words "castellated" and "monoceros." Jim Dale is hardly the typical Clark Ashton Smith protagonist. As he explains his presence in England:

I had sort of a reputation wished on me. I'd come to London to nail an embezzler; bonding company business, you know. The gent couldn't run further, so he hung himself with the cord of his bath robe. The papers made a play of me hounding the man to his death. That must have pleased Treganneth, so here I was.

Well, what can you expect from a magazine where a typical story would start with the sentence: "What surprised Reeves most, when he found himself in Atlantis, was that the relationship between the sexes was very much like that in the New York which he could remember only dimly." The Spicy pulps were formula-ridden, overly preoccupied with dimly-described nudity at the expense of story, and excruciatingly bland. It is unfortunate that two of Clark Ashton Smith's later stories should have met with such a fate (the original versions of both texts are not known to exist). But this should not be counted against E. Hoffmann Price, who after all, has never claimed that his best work appeared in Spicy Mystery Stories. It was a collaboration of convenience done for a lesser market, and the result was a pair of curiosities. It is in that light that they should be read.

# The History of Averroigne ?

By Glenn Rahman

Clark Ashton Smith's several mythic worlds stand as testimony to his capacity as an artist. His stories of Zothique, Hyperborea and Poseidonis bring age-old fantasy realms to vibrant life. Yet for all the artistry lavished upon these worlds that never were, Smith's alchemy never flowed more purely than it did in his tales of medieval adventure and sorcery in the land of Averroigne.

A remote and mysterious province of France, Averroigne was the abode of vampires, satyrs and lamias, a stage where monks, magicians, and lovers were the actors. Half-pagan in his poetic zest, Smith was the one modern American who could have recreated a world of medieval romance such as Averroigne.

But did Smith have a real locality in mind when he created his Averroignian stories? A letter to Smith from H. P. Lovecraft provides the clue.

In a missive dated December 13, 1933, Lovecraft discusses the Averroignian story "The Holiness of Aze-darac." The context makes clear that Lovecraft took for granted Averroigne's identification with the old French province of Auvergne--in modern times the area delineated by the departments of Cantal, Puy-de-Dome and Haute-Loire. Besides the similarity of names, what evidence supports this connection?

Smith's Averroigne was an isolated mountain country covered by magical forests and springs, a center of Druidic worship from time immemorial. In the medieval period its castles were peopled by witches and monsters. This description fits the

fact and folklore of Auvergne better than any other part of the French landscape. Champagne and Alsace-Lorraine, likewise forested and remote, yet fail to make a convincing match. Eastern France has always stood at the crossroads of Latin and Germanic culture and of political disturbance. Provincial Auvergne, in the quiet center of France, is much more in the spirit of Smith's creation. Moreover, the story "The Maker of Gargoyles" implies the proximity of Averroigne and Provence. A glance at the map will show that Auvergne abuts upon Provence.

How do the geographies of Auvergne and Averroigne compare? Vyones, the capital of Averroigne, must be identified with the chief city of Auvergne, Clermont-Ferrand. Like Vyones, Clermont-Ferrand stands at the heart of the province and boasts of an excellent cathedral--although, unlike Vyones, Clermont-Ferrand does not house an archbishop. The town of Ximes, often mentioned by Smith, should be sought in one of Auvergne's other cathedral towns--St. Flour or Le Puy. Of the two, St. Flour's claim is favored, since, like Ximes, it is also the site of a Benedictine abbey.

The Benedictines were preeminent in both Averroigne and Auvergne. Smith but seldom mentions any other order, and while Permonstratensian, Cistercian and Augustine monasteries flourished the length and breadth of medieval France, all the great abbeys of Auvergne were Benedictine. Smith's Perigon Abbey, the setting of several stories, is to be identified with either Aurillac or La Chaise Dieu, both monastery towns.

La Chaise Dieu's claim is stronger because, like Perigon, the associated town was comparatively small. Furthermore, La Chaise Dieu's higher prestige in Auvergne rivals Perigon's eminence in Averoine.

Averoine's physical geography also reminds us of Auvergne's. Auvergne is a highland centering upon a wide, volcanic valley. Smith, in "The Colossus of Ylourgne," mentions the "outlying, semimountainous hills of Averoine."

Accepting the hypothesis that Auvergne can, and probably did, stand as the model for Averoine, let us briefly sketch the history, fact and folklore of the one and--by implication--of the other.

Auvergne forms the center of what is called the Central Massif of France. On a map the mountains resemble a wolf's paw-print; from a central mass, the ranges grow out like toes. The highland of Gaul is a landscape of granite, oak, pine and fir, combined into dark, lonely forests. Within them abound groves of chestnuts, patches of mushrooms, and blue, glimmering pools. Legend warns visitors not to throw stones into these crater lakes, lest a terrible storm blow up.

Auvergne's resources are hardly tapped, hoarded away on those strangely-sculptured heights. From out of the fissured basalts of Auvergne pour the healing waters of France, the last product of its ancient vulcanism. The largest group of outsiders to visit Auvergne are the sufferers from gout, liver ailments, catarrh and rheumatism, drawn to La Bourboule, Chatel-Guyon, Le Mont-Dore and Royat for miraculous relief.

A thousand years before the young civilizations of Sumer and Egypt erected their monuments, the ancient West had raised up the mysterious

menhirs, the monoliths, of which Stonehenge is only the best known example. The oldest, dating back six thousand years, are found in Gaul. Auvergne claims many of these monoliths, but in the course of its history, what is six thousand years? The caves of Lascaux, west of Aurillac, contain Europe's finest prehistoric paintings--three hundred centuries old.

When history begins, the Celtic Gauls reign in Auvergne. The identity of those who held sway before them--the cunning engineers of the monoliths, the painters of the caverns--remains unknown. But in the speech of the Celts philologists detect peculiar influences, giving us pause to wonder what strange tongues Celtic has assimilated.

The province bears the name of its first remembered people, the Arverni. These were Celts in speech and custom, but H. P. Lovecraft spins a legend regarding the Averones, mentioning "that famous passage in Flavius Alesius, where it is suggested that the Averones (a dark race like the Aquitani) came from a great land in the western ocean which had sunk beneath the waves."

In general though, sources describing the ancient Gauls are very scarce and only cast light upon them at the hour of their destruction. Diodorus Siculus, Strabo, Athenaeus and Julius Caesar wrote about them, but they all used a common source, the account of the Greek Posidonius (135-50 BC).

At this early date, the Arverni were led by magician-sages, the Druids, the authoritative class in Celtic society. Interestingly, the Druids were not originally a part of Celtic culture. According to the French historian Georges Dottin, the institution never existed among the Celts of Italy, Spain, the Danube,

Thrace or Asia Minor. The priesthood of Druids was only organized in the far West--or was it borrowed there from a far older source of wizardry and wisdom?

The Druids' province was enchantment, divination and sacrifice. Sacrifices often were human. According to Caesar, the Gauls thought that the life of a man was the only way of redeeming that of another man, and that the immortal gods could not be placated in any other way. Some tribes used to erect huge effigies of woven osier, which they filled with living prisoners to be immolated by fire.

Women, too, enjoyed high Druidic offices and became the forbears of the medieval witch. Both priest and priestess emphasized the art of shape-shifting, presaging later legends of lycanthropy. Of the legendary knowledge of the Druids, of their uncanny command over all the forces of time and of space, more than enough has been written elsewhere. Gallic theology, even in its fragmentary survivals, is too vast a subject for this article. Lucan, writing in the first century AD, stated the Roman opinion of their rituals: "Cruel Teutates propitiated by bloody sacrifice, and uncouth Esus of the barbarous altars, and Taranis whose altar is no more benign than that of Scythian Diana."

A kind of fertility goddess called Sheila-na-gig ("The Lady of Breasts" --but corrected by Colin Wilson to "Sheila-na-gog," "The Lady of the Gods") was obscenely depicted upon even the walls of Gallic churches well into the Christian era. In addition to gods, Celtic mythology abounded in monsters. The Beast of Noves, whose image is preserved in Avignon, is pictured with a human hand protruding from its jaw, and its forepaws rest upon two severed

heads. Was such a creature based on fact? Events of the eighteenth century around Mende would suggest that it was.

The Arverni represented a culture so alien to our own that many moderns would be shocked by it. The Arverni practiced head-hunting and, occasionally, cannibalism. In 58 BC, Caesar initiated his campaign to conquer Gaul. The Arverni were his most skilled and determined foes. They were the last of the Gauls to be subdued and Vercingetorix, their leader, became France's first national hero. The Arverni champion dealt Caesar his only Gallic defeat, at Gergovia, and very nearly finished him at Alesia.

Gaul's culture was harsh, but no harsher than that of its neighbors who won respectability. Human sacrifice was common in the hero-tales of Greece's Mycenaean ancestors. The gladiatorial combat of the Romans was also originally a means of divine sacrifice. Nor did the fall of the Druids put an end to the burning of men in the name of religion. The pyres of medieval Christianity were gluttonously fed by the bodies of heretics. What Gallic civilization might have developed into if given a fair chance is a point of speculation. As Rome festered at the heart, it pulled the provinces down with it. Its Greco-Roman tradition was exhausted and decadent. What the Gauls could cull from the waning culture had to be superficial; what they lost in precious native lore and art was irreplaceable.

The emperors accelerated Gallic decay by the persecution of the culture-bearing Druids. The reason behind the persecutions, in strange contradiction of their religious tolerance elsewhere, has not been satisfactorily explained. The celebrants of the gladiatorial and wild beast

shows ought not to have been shocked by a few lives lost in solemn ritual. Nor was Druidism a rebellious nationalistic force; Gaul was quiescent save where a Roman governor revolted. Something in Gallic Druidism threatened the Romans in a way that the priestly mountebanks of Egypt and Syria never did. Was it the power of their sorcery that the Romans feared?

But subtle were the ways of Auvergne; the Druids kept a haven in the highland backwaters. Numerous Gallo-Roman inscriptions show that the cult continued throughout the pagan period. Some Roman emperors, if we are to believe Vopiscus' Historia Augusta, consulted Druid witches in Gaul, despite the outlawry of the sect.

Except during the civil war, Roman occupation was quiet. Augusto-Nemetum, which became Clermont-Ferrand (Vyonnes in Avergne), was founded at the outset of foreign rule. The Latin language was accepted by the hill-dwellers as readily as had been the Celtic before it. The old gods continued to be worshipped under Roman names. Gaul's greatest temple of Mercury, celebrating his Gallic counterpart, Lugh, stood in Avergne at Puy-de-Dome. Pan, identified with Cernunnos, the Horned God, was especially taken to heart.

Before Rome collapsed, Auvergne gave it an emperor, Avitus (455-457). His career was short, Avitus having alienated the Romans by dealing with Visigoths, pagans and heretics, and --as Gibbon emphasizes--by his satyrish escapades. The Visigoths actually seized Auvergne in 475, holding it until expelled by the Franks in 507.

Christianity came late to the Auvergnians--and had to accommodate itself to their ways before they ac-

cepted it. The pre-Christian cults of the West could not just disappear. To appease them missionaries willingly admitted features of the old worship into the new. Christianity translated the gods and goddesses into saints or devils. The peasant continued to bring offerings to the health-giving spring of Apollo, but now it was accredited to St. Apollinaris. Wells associated with old divinities still received reverence, but were now Christian holy wells. The old shrines and burial grounds had become Christian churches and cemeteries. Auvergne's saints did not build churches, but sought savage, lonely places to meditate, living in huts or tiny cells.

The travel writer Freda White reported in her 1964 book that she believed she found traces of Druidism still remaining in the Central Massif. Sir James George Frazer observed in The Golden Bough that on the evening of the first Sunday in Lent, fires are still kindled everywhere in Auvergne. Every village, hamlet, ward and farm has its bonfire. People dance, sing, leap through flames and then proceed to a ceremony where a straw torch is fastened to the top of a pole. When it is half-consumed, bystanders light brands from it and carry them to garden, orchard, field and every place where there are fruit trees. They pass the burning torches under the branches singing "Granno." Finally they go home and feast. This is a fertility charm which Frazer suggests is a ritual of Grannus, the Gallic Apollo, whose ancient worship is attested to by inscriptions all over France.

Visitors to Auvergne today can see for themselves how close to the surface of medieval worship stood the old paganism. In the village of Mozac, a twelfth century carved

pillar displays Pan and his satyrs. In the village of St. Paulien an old church has, under its cross, a pedestal which was once a pagan altar. In view of such evidence we must agree with Freda White, who is of the opinion that ancient influences persisted longer in Auvergne than anywhere else in France.

Auvergnians are highly resistant to outside innovation. What less can be expected of a race that has kept its ethnic spirit since pre-Roman times? Except for their language, the inhabitants of Auvergne, physically and ethically, are more akin to their brother Celts, the highland Scots, than to their continental neighbors. They have not often mixed with invaders--who have usually found the rugged hills a hard redoubt to reduce.

During the early Middle Ages, Auvergne was a part of the Merovingian and Carolingian states. When the Carolingian Empire fell apart in the ninth century, Auvergne became a separate country. William the Pious, the first hereditary count of Auvergne, in 886 also acquired the duchy of Aquitaine.

During all this time the old religion was hardly in the minority at all, according to some scholars. The ancient cult worship, so much of it associated with the Horned God, still possessed adherents everywhere, particularly in the hills and country districts. This religion of the Horned God was practiced in serious competition with established Christianity, whose corruption and elitism robbed it of its value as an edifying force and a spiritual model.

These years, up to the twelfth century, were prosperous for Auvergne. Pope Urban II chose Clermont-Ferrand for the starting point of the First Crusade. Auvergne was also the site of the first triumph of

the High Middle Ages, the architectural style known as the Roman Auvergnat. The province clung to it until the twelfth century, long after the Gothic fashion had swept the less conservative areas of France.

In 1044 La Chaise Dieu (equivalent to Smith's Perigon) was founded by Robert of Aurillac. Although a count by birth, he went into the retreat with two other monks. Before he died, three hundred disciples had attached themselves to him. The monastery grew and produced a number of the notorious anti-Popes of Avignon. Gradually La Chaise Dieu commenced a spiritual and moral decay. (Smith notes the contemporary corruption of Perigon in a wry tale, "The Disinterment of Venus.") It was sacked in the Wars of Religion and closed during the French Revolution.

The most notable personalities in Smith's Avergoigne are its sorcerers, including the remarkable Azedarac. But even Azedarac's career would not outshine that of Auvergne's Gerbert.

Gerbert, a humbly-born monk of Aurillac, became tenth century France's greatest scholar, but rumors of witchcraft and alchemy followed him all his life. He acquired arcane Moorish learning in Spain and brought back the pendulum clock and Arabic numbers to Europe.

Subsequently, Gerbert tutored the German Emperor Otto III and was appointed master of the cathedral school of Rheims. He took part in a successful plot to remove Charlemagne's heirs from the throne of France. His intrigues continued when he usurped the archbishopric of Rheims, despite his low birth. Finally, threatened by excommunication, Gerbert resigned and returned to the court of Otto III. Under royal patronage he won the see of



Ravenna and, soon afterwards, the Papal throne itself.

Reigning as Sylvester II, he saw the coming of the Millenium (1000 AD), but suffered a troubled tenure, scandalizing himself with alchemy and intrigue. In 1001 a revolt drove the reputed wizard from Rome. He returned the next year, but died in 1003.

Auvergne's prosperity ended in the twelfth century, when it fell under the rule of the English kings through marriage. The province became a contested prize between the monarchs of France and England. The local barons used the turmoil to usurp tyrannical power over the inhabitants. Their oppressiveness is remembered to this day. A typical legend recalls the Countess Brayerre, who dined on infants.

The Hundred Years War made conditions even worse. The regional nobility joined with common mercenaries, the routiers. Under the ensuing robbery, plagues and famines, the peasantry revolted in the great Jacquerie rising in 1358. Gangs of farmers scoured the countryside, plundering manors and putting anyone with soft hands to death. They wore animal skins, as if they believed themselves one with the shape-shifting Druids of old.

The dawning of the Renaissance brought on the hysteria of the witch persecutions. There had always been crypto-pagans and sorcerers in Western Europe, but now orthodoxy itself was in ferment. The sixteenth century saw the rise of the Protestants and the French Wars of Religion. No longer was Auvergne to be left out of the violent events of Europe. Armies crossed it, struggling for possession of its towns and castles. St. Flour (Avergne's Ximes) successfully resisted a Huguenot siege. Its conservation led

it to support the royalists during the French Revolution; in retaliation the Revolutionaries demolished its famous walls.

To Clark Ashton Smith, Auvergne was one thing above all else--the haunt of the werewolf. So too was Auvergne. It is only to be expected that a magic land which pours out healing spring waters might contain a few that are evil and lycanthropic. "The Enchantress of Sylaire" tells the story of one such Avernoignian spring.

Shape-shifting was part of the wizard lore of the Druids. The haunted forests of Auvergne produced numerous werewolf legends. William of Auvergne, a bishop of Paris up to 1249, was something of a lycanthropy expert. A chapter of his De Universo treats diabolical werewolfism at length.

On July 8, 1764, commenced the most striking case of lycanthropy in the Central Massif. A werewolf, soon to be known as the "Beast of Gevaudan" initiated a rampage near Mende. So many children were slain over the following months that King Louis XV ordered out a troop of soldiers to deal with the menace.

On February 6, 1765, the troops cornered the creature, filling it with musket shot and pursuing it into a thicket, where they lost its trail. It had been a remarkable sight, running on two legs like a bear. Supposing that no beast could survive the wounds they had inflicted, the soldiers packed up and returned to Paris.

Soon the werewolf was back at work. The devastation continued until 1767, a period known as the "time of death." The parish records of the area contain long lists of victims. For three years the beast baffled and even spurned its pursuers. Modern demonologist Montague Summers

relates: "The country folks were well assured that the monster was a warlock who shifted his shape and it was useless to attempt to catch him."

But attempt they did. At last, in June 1767, a band of five hundred and sixty peasants formed a circle around the werewolf's hunting grounds and closed in. They trapped the Beast of Gevaudan in a grove near Le Sorce d'Auvert, where a local hunter, Jean Chastel, slew it with a silver bullet.

Chastel reported that the beast he killed "had a strange appearance. It had peculiar hoof-like feet, pointed ears and the body was covered with dark, tough hair." Montague Summers estimates that more than a hundred children were murdered by the werewolf. Although two hundred years and more have passed, those days of terror have left their scars on the French landscape. Freda White found that the Mende area is today a bare land, although it had once been thickly forested. "The deforestation was done to clear the land of wolves, after the devastation of the 'Bete du Gevaudan'," she reports.

This is the last reported outbreak of Auvergnian lycanthropy that has come to our attention. Perhaps the monster had been the last of the old Druidic wizards. Possibly the strange history of the Beast of Gevaudan inspired Smith's tale "The Beast of Averogne."

Historians and anthropologists have theorized that the passing of the Age of Faith, with a concurrent social and economic change, led to the decline of both Christianity and the witch cults. Industry broke down the isolation of the old community as peasants found mill work in the cities. The Age of Reason was dawning.

If the werewolf of Gevaudan was

an example of the old beliefs in their final form, we need not be sorry at their passing. But is it so? We have the testimony of travelers who suspect that there is much magic in Auvergne yet. It is this type of magic that Clark Ashton Smith wove into the marvelous saga of Averogne.

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# SUSRAN

By Lin Carter

The cold moon gleams upon the sand and with her luminance she laves  
The murmurous and moaning waves adown the seawall and the strand.

Her face of pallid ivory glows like a lamp athwart the gloom;  
Her cold and silken rays illumine the sable sinews of the sea.

The melancholy surges slide in hollow thunder at the base  
Of that colossal wall whose face frowns like a fortress on the tide.

Aloft, where stony ramparts loom, fires blaze like banners down each ramp;  
From burning brand and brazen lamp a thousand flames confront the gloom.

And where each flaring cresset streams, a sentinel from young Ophir  
Or savage Kush leans on his spear, and stares down on the sea, and dreams.

Yet higher still, the minarets of splendid Susran lift their spires--  
One glimmer of bejewelled fires, whose wonder history forgets.

Moon-dim, the vast metropolis of Susran sleeps above the main,  
For Night has seized in his domain sea-girt, antique Poseidonis.

The palace sleeps, but, like a star, above one door a lamp is set;  
A mute with thews of polished jet stands guard with brandished scimitar

Before the portal; and within the drowsy, poppy-scented room  
Dim lamps of hollowed pearl illumine a chamber vile with nameless sin;

Where, sprawling in his silken nest, he lies, the Monarch of the Age.  
A naked adolescent page has lulled Gadeiron to his rest.

There is one sea-affronting height that soars aloft above the rest  
Of Susran's castle-crowded crest, a cliff as stark and grim as Night.

Thereon, a tower of stark stone, perdurable as adamant,  
Gleams, as the moon through one cloud-rent, illumines its lofty spire alone.

Therein, a chamber like a fane, whose casements ope upon the sea;  
Enthroned on mellow ivory, Malygris gazes on the main.

Tall was the mage, austere and lean; all robed in violet was he,  
With woven-silver charactry adorned in writhing serpentine.

Enthroned on high above the rest, with silvern beard and cold green eyes,  
Dreaming, ironical, and wise, Malygris looks upon the West.

About, a tiled mosaic floor was strewn with implements arcane--  
Cucurbit, thurible, athame--and many a vellum-bound grimoire,

All intermixed with precious things of an inestimable worth--  
From bourns beyond this little earth, tribute from ultramundane kings

Or magi lesser in renown, to beg fulfillment of desire  
Or to placate Malygris' ire, and avert the thunders of his frown.

Aye, let Gadeiron rule the sea as very Master of the Age--  
 So smiles the stern, sagacious mage, who rules a vaster empery!  
 For his Imperium sublime o'er lands remote that myth neglects,  
 And spheres anterior in time, whose rays our eye but scarce reflects,  
 [s boundless as the infinite dim regions of eternal Night  
 Wherein each little star is lit by reflex of a Greater Light.

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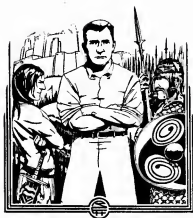
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CLARK ASHTON SMITH

# Advice to the Lovecraft-lorn



Salutations to the sybil of Cthulhu and his minions, in this the year of the fourth tentacle of Cthulhu--I am great, you are great--Greetings.

The name that I own is Abdul Alhazred the Younger, known simply as Abdul to caliphs and sultans or known as Alhazred the Younger to scholars and scribes, or just as the mad to peasants and camels. I--I have taken up the task of revising the Necronomicon--that imperfect account of the powerful ones--written by my distant ancestor Abdul Alhazred the Elder. Yes, by the glorious navel of Shub-Niggurath! I have almost finished this prodigious undertaking! Yet, to finish my laborious revision, I must now know--I must know why the Great Spider At-

lach-Nacha spins his web... never ceasing his work except to devour a hapless victim. Tell me, sybil, what is his purpose? Why does he spin with such eternal industry? Why does he seek to span a bottomless abyss with his web?

Yes, yes, I have long thought of asking him my questions face to face--but I fear--I fear calling him forth and suffering his vengeful wrath--for I know that he abhors to be parted from his eternal web-spinning. If you do not know the answers to my questions--then tell me--tell me how I may protect my hide from his fear-some bite--should I make out a mail order to America for an enormous can of Raid?

I await your reply, O sybil of the Octopoid One.

From the hand of  
A. Alhazred the Younger  
Istanbul, Turkey

Dear Al, Jr.,

A true crumb off the old cookie, aye. You seek the answer to one of the greatest mysteries of all worlds. And I'll tell you: the Great Spider is my Great Clothier. He's already overworked, so don't bug him.

Love,

Donna Death

**DONNA  
DEATH**

# R'lyeh Review

Robert Bloch, The Night of the Ripper. Doubleday, 1984. \$14.95.

(Reviewed by Marc A. Cerasini)

Jack the Ripper, unquestionably the archetypal mass murderer of modern times, has gripped the human imagination since his grisly crimes were committed almost a century ago. Volumes have been written, both fiction and fact, about events that could almost be described as mundane in this day and age; five seedy murders in a horrible slum.

Yet interest is still intense, so much so that Susan Brownmiller was moved to comment--in Against Our Will, her book about rape--not on the murders themselves, but on the prevailing fascination with the Ripper. Indeed, Jack became a "cult" figure almost immediately. Only years after the Whitechapel murders, sensationalist newspapers in Europe and the United States attributed any similar crime to Jack himself (as if the world were too small a place to house two such fiends). Amateur "ripperologists" abound to this day, and theories and suspects proliferate. Taken as a whole, these studies reveal one pertinent fact; the Ripper has become a mirror which reflects the dark side of each successive generation who examines him, and each generation finds some truth, some knowledge of itself, through studying the Ripper's handiwork. Each new theory as to the motive and identity of the murderer has reflected the fears and fantasies of the people who have propounded it.

For those unfamiliar with the Jack the Ripper affair, a short synopsis is in order. London in 1888 was rocked by five shocking mur-

ders, the first on August 30, the second September 8. The reign of terror really began September 30, when the Ripper killed two women in one night. It all culminated with the most brutal murder of all--that of Mary Kelly--on November 1. The women were all prostitutes of the lower class, all were mutilated, and all the murders occurred in what may have been the worst ghetto in the Western world, the East End. The murderer or murderers sent taunting letters to the police and to the newly formed Whitechapel Vigilance Committee. At one point a kidney taken from one of the victims was mailed to the police. After the death of Kelly the murders ceased--the Ripper was never caught. Some maintain that his murders brought about social reform and that the conditions in the slums were somewhat alleviated, but this is not borne out by Jack London's People of the Abyss, a chronicle of his excursion into this same slum twenty-five years later.

During the twentieth century, there has been a resurgence of interest in the Ripper murders. Some major new theories have been put forth, most claiming new evidence either suppressed by the police at the time or uncovered through new scientific methods. All of these theories unquestionably tell us more about the men who formed them than about the Ripper himself.

Michael Harrison put forth the theory that the crimes were the work of Eddy, the Duke of Clarence--not so surprising in this age of cynicism toward government. With the rise of Feminism came the theory that the Ripper was a botched abortionist, a Midwife of Murder, so to speak. Police and criminologists

prefer to believe that the Ripper was Montague Druitt; he "fits the facts" nicely and makes for a neat case. Conservatives prefer to think he was a Russian anarchist trying to bring down the Crown. The most recent (and perhaps the most well-documented) theory has been put forth by Stephen Knight; that the Ripper murders were ordered by Queen Victoria to cover up Eddy's scandalous marriage to a Catholic, and carried out by the Physician Ordinary, Sir William Gull--with the help of the Masons and the British painter William Sickert. This all comes in the Post-Watergate / Kennedy Assassination Era when conspiracy theories abound.

Robert Bloch, no stranger to Saucy Jack (he wrote the classic of Ripper fiction, "Yours Truly, Jack the Ripper," for Weird Tales), has written a witty, intelligent book that does the impossible--it combines and synthesizes all of these theories into a coherent, entertaining, and exciting thriller.

Mr. Bloch certainly does his homework. Just about everybody and everything who has ever been put forth as the Ripper gets a nod--from the Lady Abortionist to the Jewish schochet (ritual slaughter-man). Some of the dazzling lights of the Victorian Age show up as well; George Bernard Shaw, Oscar Wilde, even John Merrick, the Elephant Man.

Like two previous novels, Psycho and Psycho II, the story is told in short, intense chapters, and Night is spiced with gruesome headings culled from mankind's more embarrassing moments. The protagonist, Dr. Mark Robinson, is an American physician visiting London, who gets caught up in the Ripper murders. Assisting him is the real-life Inspector Abberline, who was one of the officers in charge of the case; a Brit-

ish physician, Dr. Albert Trebor (Robert Bloch?); and the lovely, tragic Eva, a nurse at a Whitechapel hospital. Like Bloch's last novel, Psycho II, any one of the characters could have been a killer.

And that is the message, and the genius, of Bloch's novels. Like all those theories on the Ripper, Bloch's story tells us something about ourselves; perhaps something ugly, but surely valid. The characters in Night of the Ripper seem at first to be standard, stock characters, not much elevated from "pulp" protagonists. Yet, as the story unfolds, the people in the novel reveal themselves in surprising--and shocking--ways. We can all see a little bit of ourselves in each of the characters, and we understand that, given different circumstances, we, too, could have been the Ripper.

This novel is not the final word on Jack. Murders and murderers of his ilk have become too much a part of everyday reality now, and that sort of reality is best dealt with in mythical terms. So, in novels, films, or even wild conjecture in the guise of fact, we will hear more from Jack the Ripper. And then, of course, there's always the six o'clock news.

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## MAIL-CALL OF CTHULHU

Crypt #s 22, 23, and 24 contain a great abundance of material of a totally "not to be found elsewhere" nature. In the entire range of Lovecraftian scholarship I can think of no other publication that has presented quite so much that is new, challenging, and intellectually stimulating since its inception.

--Frank Belnap Long  
New York, NY

The cover of Crypt 25 is one of your best ever: Fabian is, to my taste, superb. This one so reminded me of Bok that it had me searching for his sigil! F. B. Long and Carl Jacobi (long-time favourites of mine), CAS, REH, Cave, and Rimel formed a splendid line-up, and all extremely interesting--which is what you'd expect.

Also, I note that your interior artwork has gone up in quality and quantity, putting your magazine on an even higher level. I hope it isn't just for this rather special issue? What's more, a bit of controversy invariably livens up the scene a little. All very entertaining.

As a last word on criticism, I'd like to quote Samuel Johnson: "Criticism is a study by which men grow important and formidable at very small expense." Or more specifically for S. T. Joshi (because he'll probably better appreciate the Ancients) a quote from Zeuxis: "Criticism comes easier than craftsmanship." Ain't it just what I've been saying?

As for Ramsey Campbell's letter: who pulled his chain?

--Brian Lumley  
London, England

For a moment you almost had me fooled--the Weird Tales issue comes pretty close to its prototypes, and the lineup is certainly imposing. Judging from this, plus the announced contents of the next two issues, you have been busy indeed!

--Robert Bloch  
Los Angeles, CA

Crypt #25 is a knockout, as usual, especially Long's "Gateway to Forever."

--Carl Budka  
Philadelphia, PA

I received Crypt #25 and loved it. Wonderful Bokish cover by Fabian. I loved it. Enjoyed all the fiction, but my favorites, I think, were by Cave and Rimel. Nice to see my small piece appear in such a fine issue.

--Allen Koszowski  
Upper Darby, PA

Crypt 25 was excellent as always. Nice to see the Smith and REH pieces. "Gateway to Forever" by Long was a let-down for me, though. Long has always been one of my favorites of the ol' WT gang, The Hounds of Tindalos being one of my favorite Arkham collections, but this piece just did not work for me; it read more like a first draft. He has done much better. Other than that, an excellent issue of admittedly minor pieces by the great and near-so of the WT authors. I hope you can put another together in the near future.

--Dan Gobbett  
Riverdale, MD

The WT memorial was a real gas to read. Jason Eckhardt's art is just wonderful. His headers for "Strange Shadows" and "The Hampdon Horror" were marvelous. It's great news that you'll be reprinting Rimel's fiction; I look forward greatly to reading it, not to mention the Gary Myers fiction you have stacked up.

--Steve Behrends  
Ithaca, NY

Fabian and Eckhardt have always done attractive work in Crypt, but this time they've outdone themselves. The cover [of #25] really has the feeling of a Bok illo, and the interior art captures perfectly the quaintly pedestrian quality of 1930s pulp artwork. The Allen Koszowski illo on p. 40 is also exceptional. You really captured the look and spirit of Weird Tales. (The only thing you didn't--or couldn't--reproduce is the marvelous pulp smell it had.)

I've never before written to express my thanks and appreciation to you for the beautiful magazine you produce and for reintroducing me--through Crypt--to the world of HPL fandom. I really can't tell you just how delightful and exciting it was to discover a high-quality zine devoted exclusively to Lovecraft. The first thing that impressed me was Crypt's unique blend of humor and serious scholarship/criticism. The mag is free of the deadly solemn, frequently pretentious qualities that characterized some of the Lovecraft criticism I'd occasionally seen during the 1970s. "Lovecraft As I Seem to Remember Him" is a perfect example of the spirit of playfulness which gives Crypt its distinctive tone and makes it such a joy to read.

Of course it is the serious articles that give Crypt its lasting value. Steve Mariconda's "H. P. Lovecraft, Prose Stylist" [Crypt #12] is pre-

cisely the kind of close textual (or stylistic) analysis Lovecraft's work deserves, and also is a worthy polemical essay. For it stands as a sturdy refutation of the regrettably widespread assertion (best exemplified by Edmund Wilson) that Lovecraft was a poor stylist given to purple prose. If Lovecraft ever receives the sort of grudging respect mainstream criticism now accords Raymond Chandler it will be due to persuasive essays like Steve's.

Will Murray is consistently good, and I always look forward to things by Dirk Mosig and Richard L. Tierney. I do wish we could have more stuff by Charles Hoffman and Marc Cerasini.

--Jeff Newman  
Jersey City, NJ

I've seen quite a few issues of Crypt and must say I'm impressed! Especially with the special issues such as the Lumley and Tierney issues and the excellent Mythos grimoires issue! Also, I have a few suggestions I hope you'll consider. First, I heard you are having a Lin Carter issue, which I anxiously await, for he is really an underrated writer of Mythos fiction, and I wonder if you'll consider reprinting his tale, "The City of Pillars" since it is a story which is hard to find copies of. And also I think a Ramsey Campbell Mythos issue would be nice (witness his recent return to the Mythos) and perhaps you could reprint his "Before the Storm," which is also hard to find. And lastly, how about a collection of the Morgan Smith tales of Robert Weinberg and occasionally Paul Berglund? I know Weinberg probably doesn't want to see them again but perhaps he can be convinced.

A return of the Hounds of Tindalos and a Mythos piece by Eddy Ber-

tin! I can hardly wait! How about reprinting some of the better pieces from the EOD? There's over ten years of interesting tales by such as Shoffner, Adams, Pugmire, etc.

Well, keep up the good work and respect your Elder Gods.

--James Ambuehl  
Bemidji, MN

Begrudgingly I'm extending my subscription to your Crypt of Cthulhu. "Begrudgingly" ? ? ? Where's Donna!?! Where's the humor ? ? ?

It's CRYPT OF CTHULHU not LOVECRAFT STUDIES!!!

I don't want or expect MAD Magazine . . . but let's not get too serious!

"Mail-Call's" getting a little old. . . Too many big name who's who's!

I like new and different alternatives!

--David A. Kraklow  
Carbondale, IL

I write primarily to address a point raised by Joel Lane in your letter column. I am glad he finds my assessments of HPL sane and reasoned (but then, appearances can be deceiving, as I remarked to Wellington at Waterloo, some while back). To clarify: I suppose the difference between me and some of HPL's more fanatical admirers is that, while I rate the Old Gent very highly as a fiction writer and as a critic, I don't consider him to be a great philosopher, and I do not regard his every effusion as a pearl of priceless wisdom and beauty. In fact, I consider most of his poetry to be more the sort of priceless pearl that a pigeon drops out of the sky.

At the same time, I am glad you published Saturnalia. I would agree with Mr. Lane that most of this stuff is bad. I fail to find much of the merit Joshi claims to have detected.

Yet the stuff is of interest, and certainly of value to the curious, and to literary scholars. Sprague deCamp (in his Howard biography) has capably shown how a writer's verse may be mined for biographical information. As Karl Wagner pointed out a few issues back, the whole purpose of the fan, or specialty, press is to make this sort of esoterica available to those interested. If you'd done it in an incredibly elaborate, \$400 edition, illustrated by Michaelangelo and bound in exquisitely-tooled yeti hide, I probably would have resented it, but your unpretentious format for Saturnalia helps keep things in perspective.

Mr. Lane raises another interesting point: can Lovecraft be fairly compared to Poe? I think the answer is yes. Lovecraft was, in the same sense that Poe was, a great writer. He is probably more widely read. Poe is merely better established in the school system, so that everyone who ever went through high school English has probably read at least one Poe story or poem. So Poe is more of a household word, but this is not the only measure of success or importance. I think Lovecraft is seen as an equal by people who know a little more about this area of writing. Quite possibly Lovecraft will have more to say to future generations than Poe will. The great mounds of critical and academic material will come, as inexorably as a creeping glacier. In fact, I think Lovecraft may have gained more critical respectability in the forty-seven years after his death than Poe did.

But another thing Poe and Lovecraft have in common is that their reputations rest on a very small percentage of their total writings. Poe wrote crap. If he can be allowed

"The Journal of Julius Rodman" or "The Tale of Jerusalem," then Lovecraft can have his "Herbert West" or "From Beyond." You need only read a dozen unfamiliar Poe titles to see just how bad Poe could be. He was also given to shameless critical practices, log-rolling for his friends, and worse. In the new Library of America volume of his Essays and Reviews, you can find a review of a book of Poe's stories--written by Poe himself, and published anonymously in a magazine. He assures us in no uncertain terms that Poe is a writer of striking originality and power.

At the same time Poe has nothing like Lovecraft's letters, which, to my mind, are as worthy of being considered literature as Pliny's are. And Lovecraft probably has a larger body of respectable fiction than Poe does. Poe's reputation really depends on his poems and perhaps fifteen stories, all of them short. Lovecraft has a larger selection of short stories, novelettes, and novels. And, with Charles Dexter Ward, I think HPL came closer to writing a successful novel than Poe ever did.

I might add that Mr. Lane may be reading too much into "The Quest of Iranon." We need not question the author's emotional maturity. The story is simply imitation-Dunsany, and a specimen of the sort of romanticism between beautiful and merely pretty, with a "farewell cruel world" theme which doesn't quite convince. It is comparable to several Dunsany stories, such as "Carcassone" and "The Sorrow of the Search," although it adds an element of (seeming) self-pity not found in Dunsany.

"The Supreme Moment," interestingly, bears considerable resemblance to DeCamp's "Judgment Day" (in A Gun for Dinosaur), but with the great difference that DeCamp's ver-

sion is written with genuine feeling, an insight into his characters (where Howard's is a stereotype), and a much greater degree of technical sophistication. His version is a full story, rather than a capsule/synopsis. It would be very educational for would-be writers to compare the two.

--Darrell Schweitzer  
Strafford, PA

Crypt of Cthulhu #25 was most impressive! I loved Steve's cover pastiche of Bok. Remarkable issue.

--Ben Indick  
Teaneck, NJ

I was somewhat taken aback by Joel D. Lane's letter in Crypt #25, which seems to have twisted out of context certain things I said about Lovecraft's poetry in my introduction to Saturnalia. I do not believe I have ever claimed that Lovecraft's poetry deserves to be ranked with the world's greatest; but I confess to having doubts as to whether Mr. Lane is so great an authority on poetry as to declare the poems in Saturnalia "unmitigated garbage": I would not come to such a conclusion, and I have read most of the great and not-so-great poets of the world from Homer to W. H. Auden. A few of the poems in Saturnalia were as good as the best of Lovecraft's verse--a fairly cautious and reserved statement, I thought. Mr. Lane may perhaps lose patience with Lovecraft's archaic idiom; but, as I tried to point out in my introduction, we have no right to criticize Lovecraft for his conscious and willful choosing of that idiom--that is his decision as an artist.

I am, moreover, not entirely certain that Lovecraft need be relegated to the permanent status of a minor writer: if the general prejudice

against fantasy and horror amongst English-speaking critics gives way, then we may well see a fairly universal elevation of Lovecraft to the status of a major writer. Of course I am a supporter of Lovecraft; but I trust my work shows that I have not approached him uncritically or without having absorbed the authentically great writers and thinkers of the Greek, Latin, French, German, Italian, and English languages.

When shall I "come to terms with the offensiveness of some of [my] hero's utterances"? "Offensiveness" is a matter of opinion; perhaps some of Lovecraft's remarks give some people offense and others not; perhaps some things Lovecraft said (like his racist remarks) would not have caused so much offense in his time as they do in ours. My point is not to pass judgment on Lovecraft (for in fifty or a hundred years' time someone else may pass an entirely different judgment and deem my own ridiculous) but to view him as a literary and historical and cultural figure. What do you want me to do? slap Lovecraft figuratively on the wrist for some of his statements? What will this accomplish? I want to understand why Lovecraft said and did the things he did, not to chastise him for it; perhaps, in the end, I may find that he had very good reasons for saying what he did (which is not necessarily to say he was right in so saying it). Nothing is accomplished by getting worked up about some of Lovecraft's more controversial views.

Colin Wilson, in The Strength to Dream, already suggested "The Birthday of the Infanta" as an influence on "The Outsider"; there are perhaps likelier sources. One other strange remark made by Mr. Lane: he calls "The Quest of Iranon" a  
(continued on page 23)



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# NEXT TIME . . .

Reading this magazine you could be excused for assuming that H. P. Lovecraft had never written anything but his Cthulhu Mythos tales. Most Lovecraft pastiches are Mythos tales; fantasy gamers know HPL only via the Mythos gods and grimoires; even Lovecraft scholars concentrate on the philosophical underpinnings of the Mythos. But of course Lovecraft wrote many horror stories that have nothing to do with Cthulhu and his kin. And Crypt of Cthulhu #28 focuses on the "Non-Mythos Horror Tales" of Lovecraft:

"Sources for 'The Colour out of Space'" by Will Murray

"The Humor at Red Hook" by Robert M. Price

"Abnormal Longevity in 'The Picture in the House'"  
by Darrell Schweitzer

"Lovecraft and the Regnum Congo" by S. T. Joshi

"The Terrible Old Cat" by Will Murray

"A Note on 'Cool Air'" by Will Murray

Plus Donna Death, "Fun Guys from Yuggoth," and more detestable fun!

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